The Esoteric

KANDAR ANUBHUTI

N.V.Karthikeyan

The Esoteric

KANDAR ANUBHUTI

OR

The Secret Teaching on

GOD-EXPERIENCE

(A Treatise on Adwaitic Realization)

OF

SAINT ARUNAGIRINATHAR

By

N.V. KARTHIKEYAN

eBook

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Dedicated

To

Gurudev Swami Sivananda

My Divine Master and the Inspirer

(N.V. Karthikeyan at the Feet of Gurudev Swami Sivananda, after performing a *Paada-Puja* to Him, in August, 1962)

N.V. Karthikeyan at the Holy Samadhi Shrine of
Gurudev Swami Sivananda,
After a grand Puja on a recent Guru Purnima Day.

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FOREWORD-1*

Om Skandam Vande Loka-Gurum Om.

Salutations to Lord Karttikeya, personification of the Power of Grace of Lord Siva, the Divine Leader of the celestial hosts, the beloved off-spring of Mother Para-Sakthi or Vidya Maya and the mysterious Sadhana-Shakti infilling the pure hearts of sincere seekers on the path to Divine Experience! May His blessings be upon you all!

It gives me the greatest pleasure to write these words in respect of this present work, namely, an English rendering of the renowned Tamil work, "Kandar Anubhuti" by the great Saint Sri Arunagirinathar of Thiruvannamalai in South India. This highly mystical, poetical work is shiningly radiant with the Light of Transcendental Experience. The rare and supreme treasure of God-Experience is made available to the eager souls in quest of God through this sublime poem replete with the ecstatic bliss of the wonderful Saint Arunagirinathar who gave it to the world. But locked up in the close confines of the original Tamil language this unparalleled wealth and spiritual treasure was lost to the great majority of the aspirant-world. Therefore, great indeed is my joy that the present translator (a namesake of the Lord Himself) Sri N.V. Karthikeyanji has now rendered a signal service to the non-Tamil-knowing world by bringing into broad day-light, as it were, this lofty spiritual work of the highest order. This unique service is made even more valuable by the most excellent commentary in English upon each one of the verses that make up the work Kandar Anubhuti.

The standard of the commentary is very high and bespeaks of the undoubtable spiritual status of the translator and

commentator Sri N.V. Karthikeyan. He is known to me personally over these past ten years and I have observed him to be a spiritually evolved soul who has the grace of God and our beloved Guru Maharaj Swami Sivanandaji. He has earned the deepest gratitude of the whole world by this unique spiritual service he has done by undertaking this English version of this mystical poem of Saint Arunagirinathar. During these past three years from 1969 onward, "The Divine Life" monthly journal has had its value greatly enhanced by the appearance in serial form of portions of this present work in regular installments in each monthly Issue of the above magazine of our Society. I have observed with great pride and satisfaction the distinctive spiritual progress and maturity of this sincere disciple of our worshipful Gurudeva Sivanandaji Maharaj. While congratulating him upon this excellent work, I also prayerfully wish that the Lord may bestow upon him this same Anubhuti he has so well and ably explained through his very lucid and luminous commentary. May Lord Skanda reveal Himself to him in all His divine glory and grant him the bliss of Aparoksha Anubhuti in this very life!

I wish this most inspiring, revealing, and invaluable work the widest circulation all over the world. May it be translated into many other foreign languages too and may countless earnest seekers be benefited thereby. I am happy to write these words and express my joy and appreciation. God's Grace be upon all readers.

Om Sri Saravanabhavaya Namah!

Sivananda Ashram,

Holy Skanda Sashthi Day, *Swami Chidananda*,

26th October, 1971. President,The Divine Life Society.

FOREWORD-2*

It is with deep satisfaction that I have gone through the exposition of one of the immortal works in religious literature — *Kandar Anubhuti* of Saint Arunagirinathar — presented by Sri Karthikeyan, whose earnestness of spirit and honesty of purpose in making this wisdom available to all seekers in the world I can personally vouchsafe due to a fairly long contact I had with him for years, as well as my observation of his fervor in things spiritual and his ardent longing for a Godly life of service, devotion, and an immense goodness in dealing with issues in general. Such an author as this, ably fitted to share his thoughts on subjects concerning the profounder themes of the Spirit, should be regarded as one who is in a position to understand the psychological and practical processes of Sadhana which are mystically presented by Saint Arunagirinathar.

The present exposition is precisely the seeker's point of view, for that is really the right point of view which one has to adopt in treating of a spiritual text intended for catering to the needs of the soul of man. We are naturally more concerned with what we are at present than what we would be or ought to be in a purely idealistic sense. And what we are presently is a complex bundle of entanglements, passions, urges as well as aspirations. All these should indeed necessitate and call for a realistic approach to facts of the inner life of man, which will at once draw appeal from souls rather than personalities. From this assessment, it will be found that the Kandar Anubhuti, as commented on here in great detail, will be the most appropriate study-guide in daily life to all sincere Sadhakas who are struggling on the path to self-restraint and self-composure. Not only this. The work is a powerful aid in gaining access into the

ideal realization which awaits one in the end. It is thus a compendium combining in its compass a beautiful description of the means of living a disciplined spiritual life as also of the end to be attained thereby — the *summum bonum* of existence. May the work be ushered in for the release of beneficent forces throughout the world!

Swami Krishnananda,

25th May, 1972. General Secretary, The Divine Life Society.

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*Forewords given for the book "Kandar Anubhuti" published by the Divine Life Society in 1972.

PREFACE

Prostrations, Adorations and Salutations to the Supreme Being, the Almighty Lord Skanda, Sadgurudev Swami Sivanandaji Maharaj and Saint Arunagirinathar. This treatise is offered at their Holy Feet as a humble service of love and gratitude for all the inspiration they have been giving me always. But for their guidance from within, this work would not have been possible at all. All glory to them! May their blessings guide us to reach the Goal in this birth itself, is my prayer.

Lord Skanda shines in a Self-absorbed state, in the small shrine dedicated to Him in the Bhajan Hall of the Sivananda Ashram. Pilgrims and devotees, seekers and aspirants, poets and philosophers, saints and sages, Indians and foreigners constantly visit this holy Ashram of Swami Sivanandaji Maharaj, for various purposes — for simple Darshana, for spiritual solace, for learning Yoga and Vedanta, to study Indian culture and religion, etc. When they visit the Bhajan Hall and see the idol of Lord Skanda, they become curious to know who this Lord is.

In one of his Thiruppugal songs, Saint Arunagirinathar says in one line, "*Koorum Adiyaargal Vinai Thiirkkum Mugam Onru*" — "One of the (six) faces (of Lord Skanda or Shanmukha) destroys the Karmas of those devotees who sing His praises." An idea, therefore, came to my mind that I should write about the glory of Skanda. The Divine Life Society runs an English monthly entitled, "The Divine Life." The best way to fulfill the above purpose, I thought, would be to contribute some articles about Lord Skanda in that journal. But where is the material!

I have been and am doing daily *Paaraayanam* (devout recitation) of the Tamil work *Kandar Anubhuti* of Saint Arunagirinathar since some years, though without knowing the meaning of the verses fully. Yet the hidden power of the work is such that it gave and continues to give me inner solace. It is a treatise of 51 verses. During the course of the recitation of the Kandar Anubhuti, I found that the verses contain deep spiritual import, much more than what apparently appears on their surface.

During those years (Nineteen sixties and seventies), I and other resident Sadhakas, Sannyasins, and visitors had the rare privilege of listening to the highly illuminating, thoroughly rational and searching expositions of Sri Swami Krishnanandaji Maharaj on Vedantic scriptures such as the Bhagavad Gita, Upanishads, etc. Listening to his lectures and the daily recitation of the *KandarAnubhuti* revealed to me the fact that the verses of the Kandar Anubhuti contain the deep secrets of the Upanishads and other scriptures which were so impressively expounded by the Swamiji. I, therefore, thought that the best and easy way in which I can sing the glory of Lord Skanda is to try to write a commentary on Saint Arunagirinathar's "Kandar Anubhuti" in which I can bring out the Upanishadic teachings which it contains and at the same time expound the *Avatara, Lilas,* and glory of Lord Skanda, wherever possible, as there is reference to the different aspects of the Lord and His achievements in most of the verses. Thus, did I choose to render the Kandar Anubhuti into English and serialize it in the Society's monthly journal.

But, not having enough knowledge of the scriptures either of the Tamil or Sanskrit language, and also the attempt being maiden, I was a bit diffident about the venture. Hence, before starting the serialization, I first translated all the verses with a short commentary for each verse and thus prepared the whole

manuscript. Then I approached and made a request to Sri Swami Krishnanandaji Maharaj — whose ideas it is that are mostly made use of in the explanation of the verses — who was also the Editor of the journal, to kindly go through my articles and correct them suitably, to which he readily agreed and which he did with great care and patience even in the midst of his multifarious activities. I am immensely indebted to Sri Swami Krishnanandaji Maharaj for all this kindness as also for the clarifications and guidance he gave whenever I sought his help. Thus, the serialization, with the title 'God-Experience', started in the March 1969 Issue of the Society's monthly journal, "The Divine Life", and was completed in the September, 1971, Issue of the journal. In 1972, it was published as a book, under the title "Kandar Anubhuti", by the Divine Life Society**.**This is the simple way in which the book, the "Kandar Anubhuti," had its birth. But Divine Will seems to have been different, with a purpose altogether different from that of mine.

Saint Arunagirinathar's work "Kandar Anubhuti" is held in high esteem both by scholars as well as devotees, as each verse is very deep and touching the different layers of one's personality. But, the verses appear to be so unconnected with one another that the work has been regarded by many as a collection of verses independently sung by the Saint at different times, and not as a treatise given with a purpose. Hence, I also wrote my commentary, based on those of the other authors, treating every verse as independent.

However, in the course of translation of the verses and expounding them, I could see a kind of vague link of ideas between certain verses on their very surface in a few places, for instance, in verses 12 and 13; in 28 and 29; in 33, 34, and 35; in 42, 43, and 44; between 39 and 43, and 2 and 43; etc. This led me to think seriously that there should be a complete link of ideas running through all the verses from the beginning to the

end, like a golden thread. Especially, as the Title 'Kandar Anubhuti' (God-Experience) suggests, the purpose of the Saint's giving the work is to help seekers attain that God-Experience, I strongly felt that there must be some inner link between the verses so as to provide the needed guidance to the seeker in his attainment. And if it is not apparently visible on the surface, it should be hidden as the esoteric meaning. Though this feeling was very strong in me, I failed to arrive at any definite line of thought.Yet something was working in me in a subconscious way telling me that there is a grand purpose behind this unique work. The conviction that there must be a link of ideas between the verses was un-erasable and it continued to work in a subtle way even in the midst of the daily activities. And during my lonely evening walks, in the jungle path of the Himalayas behind the Ashram, this gained an upper hand and I could not help pondering over this deeply, when the esoteric meaning behind the verses used to flash in my mind, though in a hazy manner. Hence, in that book "Kandar Anubhuti" published in 1972[1]*, though I explained each verse as independent (like all other authors), I also gave the esoteric significance at the end of each verse within [ ] to serve as a guide to Sadhakas, as I could no longer regard the verses as totally unconnected and independent, but only as a definite link in the chain of esoteric significance. In the Preface of that book I had also written:*"Sometimes I even used to think that I should write another book interpreting and explaining the verses purely from the point of view of their esoteric significance, i.e., an exclusive commentary treating each verse as only a link in the chain of esoteric significance, from a Sadhaka's point of view, -- (providing him with the needed guidance from the beginning of Sadhana, helping him overcome the obstacles that*

[1]* The second and third editions of the book were published in 1990 and 2005, respectively; it has been translated and published in the Italian language in 1999 and in the German language in 2009.

present themselves at different stages of his Sadhana and finally attaining that grand Goal of God-Experience).” Such was my conviction regarding the work ‘Kandar Anubhuti’, which has eventually taken the shape of this book “The Esoteric Kandar Anubhuti”. It was all purely the grace of Gurudev Swami Sivananda and Lord Skanda that guided me throughout. They did not allow me to rest satisfied until the Divine plan is fulfilled.

While trying to understand the esoteric meaning of the verses, we would do well to remember that the Kandar Anubhuti was given by Arunagirinathar placing himself in the position of a Sadhaka. Hence, for the time being, one should forget that the verses refer to Arunagirinathar himself, but feel that a Sadhaka, rather oneself, sings the verses. This will enable one to catch the spirit of the esoteric meaning.

My efforts would be amply rewarded even if one seeker is helped a bit in his onward march to the Goal. Of course, it goes without saying that I have derived the greatest benefit in writing this commentary, as many great truths and secrets have been revealed to me in the course of my effort at this task.

Each verse is rendered in the following manner:

a) First, the **original Tamil verse**. (The breaking of the words has been done not so much according to grammar but keeping in view the purpose — of easy reading and utility; and easy understanding even while reading.)

b) Second, **a transliteration** of the Tamil verse in Roman character. Diacritical marks not being available and due to the peculiar pronunciation-characteristics of the Tamil letters, no uniformity could be maintained in the transliteration.

c) Third, the original Tamil verses being of four lines, **a free-style translation in verse-form** is given next — the translation

being line-by-line as much as possible and permissible, and as close to the original as could be.

d) Fourth, **a translation (meaning) of the verse in prose** — the translation being as far as possible literal and wherever necessary words being given within brackets to make the sense complete, without losing the spirit of the verse.

e) Fifth and last, **a detailed commentary** on the verse, from the esoteric point of view showing its connection with the previous verse(s). (A rational approach based on Vedantic lines is attempted in explaining the verses).

Anecdotes, stories, and references from the *Skanda Puranam* are drawn as much as possible in the course of explanation of the different Names and Deeds of the Lord, referred to in the verse.

I am immensely thankful to The Divine Life Society for granting me permission to include excerpts from my book 'Kandar Anubhuti' published by the Society, in this book "The Esoteric Kandar Anubhuti".

May the Grace of Lord Skanda illumine our path and crown our endeavours with success, is my honest prayer.

Sivananda Ashram, Rishikesh.

11th December, 2016. N.V.Karthikeyan

AN INTRODUCTION TO "KANDAR ANUBHUTI"

Kandar Anubhuti is a deeply philosophical and spiritual treatise with profound mystical import of Saint Arunagirinathar, who stands unique among the devotee-saints of the Tamil Nadu. It is a work of 51 verses. It is held in high esteem as a *Mantra-Shastra* and as the crowning glory of Sri Arunagirinathar's works, because of its high spiritual value and depth. The verses are short, rather the smallest in all his works, but they are the most sublime. As the title suggests, it is a work on (the attainment of) God-Experience. There are certain editions of the Kandar Anubhuti with 100 verses, but the last 49 verses are generally rejected as later additions by someone and not Arunagirinathar's words.

"*Kandan*," in Tamil, is "Skanda" in Sanskrit; it is one of the Names of the spiritual Son of Lord Siva. Some of Skanda's other Names are: Shanmukha, Karttikeya, Guhan, Velayudhan, Murugan, Aarumugan, etc. He is the younger brother of Lord Sri Ganesha. "*Anubhuti*" is rather a Sanskrit term used in the Tamil language as well in the same sense, i.e., direct or Immediate Experience of God, and it denotes the spiritual union of the soul with God. It usually implies the highest non-dual or Advaitic Realisation. It is *Saakshaatkaara* or direct Experience. Hence, "Kandar Anubhuti" would mean the Immediate or Direct Divine Experience of Lord Skanda. And, to Arunagirinathar, Lord Skanda is not merely a personal deity or *Ishta Devata* but the Supreme Absolute Itself, as he himself reveals in many verses, particularly in verses 2, 13, 28, and 49. Hence, we may say that "Kandar Anubhuti" means, in simple terms, "God Experience" or "God-Realisation".

Saint Arunagirinathar is the author of many poetic works of which the *Kandar Anubhuti* is his masterpiece. Though it is a small work of 51 verses or stanzas, it is very rich in spiritual wisdom and is full of deep significance. It is a treasure of rare knowledge to seekers of Truth and a mine of devotion to lovers of God. It is an unusual work of a mysterious synthesis of *Bhakti* and *Jnana*, of devotion and wisdom — the one overlapping the other; at once touching the heart and igniting pure emotions as well as provoking deep thought and transcending the intellect. Suffice it to say that it is regarded as a *Mantra-Shastra* or a treatise of mystic imports and has been placed on par with the well-known Mantra-Shastra of *Thirumanthiram* — a treatise of 3,000 verses of Saint Thirumular, who used to remain absorbed in Samadhi for one full year, only to rise from it to give one verse and remain absorbed again. The *Thirumanthiram* is the 10th book of the *Panniru Thirumurai* (the 12 sacred Saiva works) of the Saivites. Correspondingly, the *Kandar Anubhuti* is regarded as the 10th book of the *Panniru Thirumurai* of the followers of Lord Murugan. Thus, the glory and greatness of the work can be understood in a measure, though to realise it in full measure it has to enter into one's being and become part of one's own experience.

It is rightly believed that the work Kandar Anubhuti contains in itself, explicitly and implicitly, many Mantras. The Names of the Lord, such as Murugan, Kanda, Shanmukha, Guhan, Velava, are Mantras by themselves; and the work is replete with these Names of the Lord. Further, in many verses there are Mantras in the form of mystic formulae. For instance, "*Velum Mayilum Thunai*" in verse 1, "*Naathaa Kumaraa Namah*" in verse 36, "(*Naan) Iraiyoon Parivaaram*" in verse 37, "*Guruvaai Varuvaai Arulvaai Guhane*" in verse 51 — the details about which can be found in the explanations of the verses. There is also another reason why the Kandar Anubhuti

is regarded as a Mantra-Shastra. "*Mananaat Traayate Iti Mantrah:*" — that by the *Manana* or reflection of which one is saved or released (from Samsara) is a *Mantra.* Truly, a deep reflection and meditation on this mystic work and its imports liberates one from bondage.

The Vel of Lord Skanda, which is identical with Him, is a mystic Divine weapon with which He destroyed the Asuras. The Vel which is Wisdom-Absolute also annihilates the inner Asuras or enemies of *Avidya, Kaama,* and *Karma,* and liberates the Jiva from transmigration. The Vel is a mysterious divine power and is referred to by Saint Arunagirinathar as the Mantra-Vel in one of his Thiruppugazh songs. And, out of the 51 verses of the *Kandar Anubhuti*, there is a direct invocation to the Vel in 25 verses. For this reason as well, the work is regarded as a Mantra-Shastra.

Thus, being replete with the Names of the Lord, which are Mantras; containing many mystic formulae (Mantras) in its bosom, a reflection or repetition of which liberates one from Samsara; being filled with invocations to the Vel which is mystic in nature, which destroys Avidya; a daily recitation of this marvelous Mantra-Shastra, the *Kandar Anubhuti*, is capable of bestowing on one whatever one honestly seeks and exactly in the manner one seeks. Hence, to the devotees of Lord Skanda, the *Kandar Anubhuti* is a holy book for daily *paaraayanam* (devout recitation) and there are devotees even today who can narrate their personal experiences and the miraculous protection received by them from the Lord by resorting to the repetition of a single verse or even a part of a verse from the *Kandar Anubhuti*. We may, in passing, refer to one or two such instances.

(1) A devotee, who used to do daily *paaraayanam* of the *Kandar Anubhuti*, was proceeding from one village to another

through a jungle-path. He was suddenly accosted by a thief. The devotee plucked the stem of a betel leaf which he was carrying and uttering the phrase "*Tholaipatturuvath Thodu Velavanae*", meaning: "O Lord Velayudha, who dispatched the Vel as to pierce (through the heart of the Asura Surapadman)" (last line of verse 4), shot it on the thief. Lo! The betel stem acted as the Vel and killed the thief on the spot.

(2) The Saiva Siddhanta Maha Samajam, Madras, has published a book entitled "Kandar Anubhuthi", in Tamil, with the original verses, their respective Yantras or Chakras and Mula-Mantras. Its author is Sri M.P. Thyagaraja Mudaliar, B.A., who was the Assistant Secretary of the Samajam. He was initiated into the verses and the Yantras by a Sannyasin who had attained great Siddhis in them and to whom the Yantras and Mula-Mantras were revealed in meditation. The author has narrated an interesting incident in his book, as follows:

"It was in the year 1956. An American, Mr. Edward James, was doing Devi Upasana and had some obstacles in his practices. He wrote from America to the revered Mudaliar to suggest some means to overcome the obstacles. In his reply, Sri Mudaliar hinted at the need for invoking Lord Ganesa's grace to overcome the obstacles and advised him to repeat the first verse of the Kanthar Anubhuthi (*Aadumpari Vel…*) together with its Mula-Mantra and Yantra. Mr. James acted accordingly and in about three months' time, he had a mysterious experience. He wrote: 'While I was thus meditating, an elderly person, clad in pure white clothes and with a Kamandalu in his hand, surrounded by elephants, appeared in my room, and poured from his Kamandalu a little holy water into my mouth and that of my wife who was also in meditation. Then everything disappeared into a mass of light. Since then I am totally transformed and I continue my Devi Upasana without any impediment.'"

From the above incidents, we can imagine the immense benefits that could be derived from a systematic *paaraayanam* of the Kandar Anubhuti, daily. If a line in a verse or a single verse can do so much, what cannot be achieved by a recitation of the whole work? An unselfish, daily recitation of all the 51 verses without any expectation from the Lord, not only removes one's physical and psychological ills, and protects one from all dangers, but also bestows on one the higher blessings of pure love of God and Divine Wisdom as well, is my own conviction and experience.

To my knowledge, there is no commentary on the Kandar Anubhuti available in English, though there are a few bare translations of the verses only. There are, of course, many commentaries available, in Tamil, on this great work and each one has a specific purpose or is characterised by certain predilections. Thus, there are commentaries purely for students, direct and simple, so as to enable them to understand the meaning even as they recite the verses; for the masses, delivered as a series of talks and subsequently edited and published; for scholars, with profuse quotations and cross references from the different Tamil works; for devotees, extolling the glory and greatness of the Lord by recounting His Divine Deeds with anecdotes and stories so as to instill faith in their hearts; and so on and so forth. There are again commentaries based on the Saiva Siddhanta philosophy as well as on the Vedanta philosophy. My effort is to interpret and explain the verses mainly from the viewpoint of a Sadhaka or a seeker of Truth, so as to be helpful to them in their practices, rather than to be literary or academic. Hence, much searching analysis in an attempt at finding the rationale behind the pithy phrases, words and declarations used in the verses has been made in order to create the needed conviction in the minds of seekers, which unshakable conviction is a great asset to Sadhakas to be steady in their practices and plod on till the goal

is reached. Here I may mention that, to me, the Kandar Anubhuti is a treatise purely spiritual in nature and so it does not admit of any kind of low and whimsical interpretations, just to please the people. It is a holy book and has, therefore, to be treated in a holy manner, with due reverence and devotion. It would be befitting and advisable to direct our efforts to try to understand the Saint's mind and his purpose in giving such a work to the world, and explain the verses in a divine manner, raised above the sensuous and worldly views, even if it might seem out of the way and far-fetched. Hence, my effort has been to interpret and explain the verses purely from a spiritual seeker's point of view, to be commensurate with the title of the work and the purpose for which Saint Arunagirinathar gave it to the world — to help others, too, to attain that bliss which he himself enjoyed. Not much importance has, therefore, been given to scholarship, erudition, literary excellence or grammatical perfection. But, more importance and attention have been given to see that the explanations are of practical utility to seekers and provide the needed understanding and strength to encounter the day-to-day struggle with their lower nature, overcoming them gradually, and finally to attain the Goal of God-Experience. My efforts would be amply rewarded even if one seeker is helped a bit in his onward march to the Goal.

May the Grace of Lord Skanda illumine our path and crown our endeavours with success, is my honest prayer.

N.V. Karthikeyan

WHY 'THE ESOTERIC KANDAR ANUBHUTI'?

The *Kandar Anubhuti* is regarded as the crest jewel of Saint Arunagirinathar's works. Though it is a short work of 51 verses, it is very deep in its meaning and import. It is capable of rousing one's soul to a higher level of consciousness as one goes on with its chant. Thousands of devotees have derived immense delight and benefit by a daily and systematic recitation (*Paaraayana*) of the Kandar Anubhuti. Learned men marvel at the depth of knowledge and spiritual experiences contained in it. Even as fresh and cool water gushes forth from a spring as we dig more and more, so do deeper and deeper meanings reveal themselves as one goes on with a systematic chanting and study of the work for a long time. Thus the Kandar Anubhuti has been commented upon by devotees as well as eminent scholars, since each one felt that he has something rare to share with others. But my effort is to find the hidden or secret teaching, the esoteric meaning, of the Kandar Anubhuti.

Seeking the blessings of Saint Arunagirinathar, Saint Thayumanavar said:

Kandar Anubhuti Petru Kandar Anubhuti Sonna
Enthai Arul Naadi Irukkum Naal Ennaalo?

"When shall be that blessed day, when I shall seek (and be recipient of) the grace of my (spiritual) father (Saint Arunagiri) who, **after** 'experiencing' *Anubhuti* or Direct Spiritual Realisation of Lord Skanda, gave (or gifted us with) the work '*Kandar Anubhuti*'?"

Saint Arunagiri, as all of us know, is famous more for his *Tiruppugazh* songs than his other works. Why did Thaayumaanavar then single out *Kandar Anubhuti* to pay his tribute to Arunagiri, without even mentioning his other works though they are also great in themselves? He must have some great reasons and also there must be something very, very extraordinary with and intrinsic in the Kandar Anubhuti itself on account of which he has particularly chosen it. What could be that? It needs deep pondering over!

From the above pithy tribute of Thaayumaanavar we can draw some meaningful conclusions:

(1) Some authors hold that the '*Kandar Anubhuti*' is a collection of verses sung by Saint Arunagiri *independently* and *at different times* in accordance with the prevailing moods of his mind, -- religious and spiritual exaltation of mind, disturbed conditions of mind while in the process of Sadhana, prayerful moods to invoke God's grace to overcome weaknesses and obstacles, etc., etc. This view does not seem to be tenable as the work was given **after** attaining God-Experience.

(2) Another view held, which is a little bit amusing, is that the Arunagiri-parrot, after restoring eye-sight to the king with the Paarijata flowers brought from heaven, perched on a pipal tree somewhere near Tiruvannamalai, wrote with its beak each verse on a pipal leave and dropped them. The collection of those scattered leaves is the *Kandar Anubhuti*, and so there is no sequence in the verses. This does not stand even to simple reason. Because, if we can believe and accept that the parrot could write the verses, it wrote the verse numbers also. Why not? Would it not be more reasonable and should we not be charitable enough to accept that the numbering of the verses was also done by the parrot? According to some, the parrot flew

away to Tirutthani and perching on the arms of Lord Murugan there sang the Kandar Anubhuti.

Both these views are untenable as they would contradict Thaayamanavar who says, '*Kandar Anubhuti* ***sonna Enthaai'*** and NOT ***sonna Enkili.***

By saying '*Kandar Anubhuti sonna Enthaai'* Thayumanavar seems not to accept the view that the Kandar Anubhuti was given by Arunagiri as a parrot.

(3) Some hold that the Kandar Anubhuti verses were sung by Arunagiri at different times and that the arrangement of the verses was done not by Arunagiri but by someone else later and that it requires a re-arrangement. This view seems to be meaningless, as the work has come down to us unaltered for over five centuries and accepted as Arunagiri's by great saints like Thaayumanavar, and innumerable devotees have derived immense benefit from a regular *Paaraayana* or chanting of it. If the original order of the verses given by the saint is unsatisfactory, how can a rearrangement by an ordinary person be satisfactory? Further, there is a danger involved in rearranging it. The danger is that if someone rearranges the verses in a particular manner, others may find it unsatisfactory and will do it in another manner. Eventually we will have many versions of Kandar Anubhuti, each claiming his version as the true one, leading to confusion. There can be no greater disservice and disrespect to the Saint and his Divine Gift, the Kandar Anubhuti, than to think of rearranging the order of the verses.

If someone feels that the verses require rearrangement, it means he is more knowledgeable and competent than Arunagiri himself. Well, in that case it would be better he composes his

own work on 'Anubhuti' than to meddle with a work which is divine-inspired and not an intellectual composition.

There are some other views also, into the details of which we do not go. All the different views are on account of *one reason*, i.e., their inability to see a logical sequence of ideas in the verses. Because they could see no logical sequence, they have no alternative except to regard it as a collection of verses and not a treatise given by the saint. But it would be wisdom on our part to accept our inability or even try to seek a remote and far-fetched link among the verses, than to interfere with the work, which is a divine gift.

Perhaps during the time of Saint Thayumanavar itself all such views were in circulation. Instead of refuting them or saying they are not true, as a saint he simply told the truth or facts in his tribute, which automatically nullifies them.

That the Kandar Anubhuti is a regular treatise, and not a mere collection of verses, becomes evident from some of the Tiruppugazh songs themselves.

(4) As some authors hold, the Saint had for long cherished a pious wish to offer a 'Poem Garland' to the Lord, as expressed in his Tiruppugazh '*Aasaikoor Bhaktanen……..*' (T-1211), and the '*Kandar Anubhuti'* is a composition in fulfilment of this wish. A free translation of the first half of the Tiruppugazh song would read thus: "I am a devotee with a (pious) wish, -- to offer a garland to the Lord. (What kind of Garland?) A garland of poems, having the flower of the mind-lotus, being penetrated by the thread of love, artistically composed by the tongue, wafting its wisdom-fragrance, shining

in all its glory, and the bee of the intellects of the taintless ones (holy men) rejoicing in it, -- such a '*Maatrukaa Pushpa Maalai*' (poem-garland) shall I be blessed **to offer at Your coral-like red Feet!**"

"*Maatrukaa Pushpa Maalai*" is a treatise of verses with the 51 letters, of the Sanskrit language, from 'A' to 'Ksha'. It is also called '*Akshara Maalai*', i.e.., garland of letters; *Akshara* meaning letter. '*Maatrukaa Pushpa Maalai*' is also said to mean a treatise of 51 verses, because of the mere correspondence in number, and the *Kandar Anubhuti* comprises of 51 verses.

The essential points of the Tiruppugazh are these: It is **a garland of poems**, having for its flower the mind-lotus, and it is to be offered **at the Feet of the Lord**. The mind is another name for the Jiva, and the Feet of the Lord usually denote *Paramapada* or the Supreme Abode (Moksha). Thus to offer the mind-lotus to the Feet of the Lord means to offer the Jiva in the Supreme Being, i.e., to attain *Atma-saakshaatkara* or God-Realisation.

This view appears to be a satisfactory and tenable one because the *Kandar Anubhuti* is a work of 51 verses and also Arunagiri himself refers to it, in the *Kaappu-verse*, as "a *garland* knit of the beautiful words (of Tamil)" – "*Senchor Punai **Maalai***". Most probably, Arunagiri, by this succinct phrase, means the '*Maatrukaa Pushpa Maalai*' of the above Tiruppugazh (T-1211). In "*Senchor Punai **Maalai***", the word '***Maalai***' (Garland) is significant which clearly indicates that it is not a mere collection of loose-flowers (verses) but a

purposefully knit or arranged work, which means it is a 'Treatise'.

(5) Above all, that the Kandar Anubhuti is not a collection of verses but a 'treatise' *given at the specific command of the Lord,* can be seen from the Tiruppugazh '*Malaikkanaththu ena maarpinile*' (T-850), given at *Tirut-thurutthi*. At *Pothiya-Malai,* Arunagiri had prayed to the Lord to etch the seal of the spear (Vel) and the peacock on his body (T-413 -- *Vediththa Vaarkuzhal*). And, as stated in (4) above, he also wished to offer the '*Maatrukaa Pushpa Maalai*' (T-1211 -- '*Aasaikoor Bhaktanen'*). The Lord fulfilled both these prayers at *Tirut-thurutthi,* by commissioning Arunagiri to sing the (Kandar) *Anubhuti,* duly etching the *Mayil* and the *Vel* on his shoulders. At *Tirut-thurutthi,* Arunagiri seems to have had a dream or vision, about which, in a stanza of the Tiruppugazh '*Malaikkanaththu ena maarpinile*' (T-850), he says:

"Just as one who has been given refuge is protected and taken care of, You affectionately invited this worthless person and graced me by **embossing the seal of *the Vel and the Peacock*** (etched on both shoulders, as a protective shield for me) and commanded me: 'Sing MY Mukti-conferring (*Kandar*) *Anubhuti,* (which is) full of My (**Arul**) Grace and (**Tirup-Pugazh**) Divine Glory'."

(On waking up from the dream-vision) Arunagiri was overjoyed to see the emblems of **the *Vel* and the *Mayil* (Peacock)** etched on both his shoulders. His joy knew no bounds and the inspiration must have been so over-whelming that he most probably, as commanded by the Lord, at once sang the '*Kandar Anubhuti'* **then and there**. Because he was etched with the Vel and Mayil, in gratitude, he ***commences the first***

verse with **'Aadum Pari Vel ……'** meaning **'The dancing Peacock and the Vel ….;'** and also referring to and/or invoking **the Vel** in 25 verses and **the Peacock** in 8 verses, in that work of 51 verses. And the word '**Arul**' (grace) occurs right from the Kaappu and first verses, throughout the work now and then, particularly in the Anubhuti-verse-43 and the last verse-51.

Now let us go back to Thayumanavar's tribute, and proceed further. He says that **after** attaining Kandar Anubhuti or God-Experience, Arunagiri gave the work '*Kandar Anubhuti'*. Hence **if each and every one of the 51 verses of the work** deals with Arunagiri's different experience of God, then we can treat it as a collection of such verses. But it is not so. Only some verses describe the saint's God-Experience, and many of the remaining verses, which are of a curious nature, have no connection with God-Experience. Why does a work given after attaining *Anubhuti* or God-Experience contain verses which are of a curious nature? Why does Arunagiri sigh, weep and lament over his helplessness in matters of sex, fear of death, etc., as expressed in the following verses: "Should I perish bound by the shackles of wife and children? (verse 4); Even after uttering the Lord's Name which is capable of destroying *Mahamaya*, I am not freed from the world-delusion or *Jagan-Maya* or suffering from thinking of home, wealth and women (verse 5); When shall I cease from the miserable plight of tossing (of mind), being caught up in the net of infatuation for women? (verse 9); Not meditating on Thy Feet, should I totally perish of ignorance? (verse 23); Wilt Thou think of showering Thy grace on me who (am so low as to) join the breasts of women (verse 24); etc., etc., (verses 10, 16, 25, 27, 31, 33, 34, 35, 39, and 50).

Out of the above verses let us examine two here. “Should I perish bound by the shackles of wife and children?”(verse-4); “When shall I be able to give up my entanglement in the forest (Samsara) of family and wealth, which cause affliction to the mind?" (verse-33). While Arunagiri thus weeps before the Lord in these verses, in his other work, *Kandar Alankaaram*, which is regarded as given earlier than the *Kandar Anubhuti*, he emphatically declares that he has, once and forever, crossed over this ocean of sexual lust, that he has overcome death, etc. *Moreover, Arunagiri was not a householder when he gave the Kandar Anubhuti.* Thus, in view of both these reasons, they cannot evidently refer to his own personal condition or experience. Nor can we say that what Thayumanavar said of Arunagiri and the *Kandar Anubhuti* is untrue. But, then, how are we to account for these verses? Can we say Arunagiri is giving these verses as advice to householders? Or does he mean to condemn householder’s life, *Grihastha Ashrama?* No, it cannot be. Because, there is nothing wrong with the householders’ life which is regarded as the righteous way of life, a safe passage to higher life and the support of the other three orders. (‘*Aran enappattade Il waazhkai’* -- *Thirukkural*). Also, how many among the millions and millions of householders would welcome and cherish such an advice, or how many would honestly feel that wife, children and wealth are a bondage and want to renounce them, **except** the rare few in whom the spiritual Samskaras from previous lives are somewhat strong, to fan which into a conflagration seems to be the purpose of the work, the verses being in the first person. And they will also kindle the Samskaras of those in whom they are weak, and arouse them in those that do not have but who are ready for it. The work will somehow go into their hands and not

those who are fully immersed in and satisfied with the pleasures of the world.

Then there are the other types of verses such as: “Not meditating on Thy Feet, should I totally perish of ignorance?” (verse 23); “O Lord! Intellect confounded, much distressed (in mind) and deluded, losing that great Blessedness (of Anubhuti) which accrues from a virtuous or righteous life, am I to be lost in vain?" (verse-50), etc. These verses cannot refer to Arunagiri himself. Because, even before giving the Kandar Anubhuti, he was already immersed in the Bliss of God, having sung thousands of *Thiruppugazh*, *Kandar Alankaram*, etc. Where is the question of ignorance in him?

When we ponder over these deeply and in an unbiased manner, we are driven to the necessity of accepting the fact that the conditions mentioned in the above and other similar verses of Kandar Anubhuti do not refer to Arunagiri himself, but to those rare seekers of Truth or Sadhakas in whom the aspiration for God has been awakened and who need proper guidance to proceed on the path. We can, therefore, say that the work was given primarily to provide the needed guidance to them, --- starting from the commencement of the practice, the difficulties and obstacles that would be encountered on the path, the means of overcoming them, the different vexing and encouraging experiences that they would have to pass through and overcome by the instructions/grace of the Guru/God, culminating in the grand experience of God-Realisation, further ripening into a full-fledged God-Intoxicated Sage or Jivanmukta, a moving God on earth, freely distributing Bliss to one and all, wishing the welfare of mankind.

To serve the above purpose effectively, the verses are sung in the first person so that when anyone recites them they touch his heart and evoke the needed feeling in him. This gives a clue as to the *purpose* of the work, viz., to provide the needed guidance to seekers to attain that Blissful Experience which Arunagiri himself was fortunate to enjoy, i.e., it is a 'treatise' or a systematic work on *Anubhuti*.

Now, a treatise is a systematic exposition of a subject, and it should, therefore, have a clear link of ideas from verse to verse, leading one, step by step, from the beginning of Sadhana to the pinnacle of Attainment. However no such link seems to obtain on the very surface of the verses; and that, if it is not apparently visible, it should be mystically hidden, is but natural. We should, therefore, strongly feel that there should be an esoteric meaning behind the verses, in addition to their explicit meaning/instruction, so as to lead the seeker stage by stage till the attainment of the Grand Goal of God-Experience.

Thus, if we are to accept that the title and arrangement of verses of the *Kandar Anubhuti* are Saint Arunagiri's own, and that his purpose in giving the treatise is to help seeking souls in their attainment of God; if we are to do full justification to the title, '*Kandar Anubhuti*'; if we are to give due respect to Thayumanava Swamigal's tribute to the *Kandar Anubhuti*, viz., that it is a work given *after* attaining Divine Experience; and if we are to regard the work as a 'word-garland' (*Senchor Punai Maalai*) and capable of conferring mukti (all which we cannot but accept), (whether it is accepted as the 'Maatrukaa Pushpa Maalai' or not), we have every reason to strongly feel that the work should have an esoteric significance. Because, mere praise-songs or a collection of verses cannot help one attain God-Experience which is a gradual process of unfoldment, and

not an easy thing to be attained. *Anubhuti* is had as a result of *Abhyasa*; a graduated practice based on profound understanding leads to Perfection. This is what marks out the *Kandar Anubhuti* as distinct from all other works, not only of others but even of Saint Arunagiri himself. Tiruppugazh songs, Kandar-Alankaram, etc. may be meant for recitation (Bhajans) and they may be regarded as *Stuti* or praise-songs, though they contain spiritual instructions too, but not the *Kandar Anubhuti*; because mere recitation alone cannot be expected to lead one to *Anubhuti* or actual God-Experience. It demands a systematic practice, with understanding, and that is what is expounded in this rare work. We would not be wrong, I feel, if we interpret the title '*Kandar Anubhuti'* as (1) 'God-Experience', as also (2) 'the practice that leads to God-Experience'.

We also find that there is no uniformity in the verses, i.e., all verses are not of the same type, in the sense that not all are in the form of prayer, or appeal for help, or revelation of spiritual experience, or instruction, or admonition, etc. There are verses which touch and kindle the emotions; which express repentance, anxiety and prayer; which exclaim one's gratitude over the special blessings conferred; which give specific and clear-cut instructions to follow; which reveal great wisdom and secret clues to higher experiences, etc., etc. Not only this; these verses of different types are curiously interspersed, so to say. This gives the clue and suggestion that it should be a regular treatise on God-attainment, since there is a need for all these elements in such a work, as an aspirant will pass through varying mental states and experiences in the course of his practices. (This is also the reason why any attempt to rearrange the verses would nullify the very purpose of the work). The order of the verses is so calculatedly, perfectly and purpose-

fully arranged by Arunagiri (though it appears to be jumbled, on account of which the work is regarded as a collection) that the import or subject of each verse will give the needed instruction/guidance to the seeker, or reveal his inner condition/experience, or invoke the Lord's grace to overcome the obstacle, etc., as would be appropriate to the stage in which the seeker is at the particular verse. The order of the verses is designed to give out the desired expression to the condition of the seeker at every stage, through the particular verse. As he goes on chanting the verses day after day, continuing his spiritual practice, he would feel at different verses and at different times: "Oh, Arunagiri has given this verse for me," or "This verse precisely portrays my pitiable condition," or "My meditation-experience exactly tallies with this verse," etc., etc.

In fact the Kandar Anubhuti is like a spiritual barometer to find one's growth or level of advancement in his Sadhana, to know where he stands, according to which verse touches his heart!

In the Tiruppugazh and his other works, Arunagiri has said everything everywhere. As a result of reciting his Tiruppugazh and other works, a distaste for worldly pursuits and an aspiration to attain God might arise in a person, and he would like to practise some Sadhana to attain God, but would be at a loss to know what to do, where to start and how to proceed. The Lord seems to have prompted Arunagiri to give a treatise on the attainment of God-Experience (*Anubhuti*) which would be of help to such seekers, and the *Kandar Anubhuti* is the outcome, as commanded by the Lord at Tirut-thurutti.

Thus we may regard the *Kandar Anubhuti* as the crowning glory of Saint Arunagiri's works, though every work of his has

a purpose, speciality and charm of its own. All the works of Arunagiri put together may be regarded as the 'Arunagiri-Veda' of which the *Kandar Anubhuti* would form the 'Anubhuti-Upanishad'. It is the culminating and the wisdom-portion of his works. The Upanishads are the secret teachings imparted to qualified students, as the Mantras cannot be understood by unprepared minds. The verses of the *Kandar Anubhuti* are verily Mantras, like the Upanishadic Mantras, -- so concise, so pithy and so brevity-filled, with many secret clues to higher meditation and experience. In fact the work contains all the *Mahavakyas* which we will see in the course of the explanation of the verses. We can say without the least hesitation that the treatise fulfils the purpose of an Upanishad, remarkably. Truly it is a *Mantra Sastra*. Perhaps that is the reason why Saint Thayumaanavar has singled out the Kandar Anubhuti when he wanted to pay his tribute to Saint Arunagirinathar.

Now, why should the instructions be esoteric or hidden? Why should the Saint not have explicitly given them in the verses, may be a doubt. This is the general practice, with a reason, of course. Spiritual truths are kept as secrets, because, if they are given to unprepared minds, they are likely to be misunderstood, misinterpreted and misrepresented. They are always kept hidden; they have to be obtained with great effort and it demands certain prerequisites. As the work is likely to go into the hands of any one and everyone, the esoteric meanings are hidden far beyond the ordinary reach. And here is the need for the poems to be in prayer or praise form, and in the first person. When a devotee or a seeker, though initially unprepared, goes on with *Svadhyaya* or a devout and faithful recitation of the verses, they, being in the first person and the wordings so powerful and calculated, are capable of raising his

mind gradually and inducing the necessary *Bhava* or inner feeling in the seeker so as to get attuned to the feeling with which the Saint sang the verses, or which he intends to convey through the particular verse. When we recite the verses, it is as if the Saint himself is reciting them through us. We get attuned to his mind and the needed feeling is bound to be evoked in us. Thus the inner secrets of the verses get revealed from within, in course of time. They are not supposed to be openly said in the verses, nor can they be understood even if said; they are to be 'revealed'. Hard-earned wealth is valued and preserved. More so is wisdom.

Now, a word about the esoteric significance in the verses, which is not easily obtainable from them. In a few group of verses the continuity of ideas is apparent, and can be seen almost on the surface, for instance, in verses 12 and 13; verses 28 and 29; verses 33, 34, and 35; verses 42, 43, and 44; between verses 39 and 43, and 2 and 43; etc. In fact, it is this that made me feel that there should be such a link of ideas among the other verses also, i.e., in the work as a whole, and that if it is not apparent, it should be secretly hidden. In some it is clear on the surface itself; in some it is lodged in a line or phrase of the verse; in some the meaning is implied in a word; and in some it lies far beneath, as the very *spirit* underlying the verse as a whole, and gets revealed only as one goes on with the repetition of the verse, over and over again. Thus is the need for *Svadhyaya* or a regular and systematic chanting of the verses, daily, with love and surrender to God, when more truths than what is written in any book, including this one, are revealed in the heart of the seeker. This is the case not only with the *Kandar Anubhuti* but with every work of this category.

As explained earlier, *this interpretation is from the position of a seeker, in which Arunagiri places himself.* We have to reiterate this because, since the verses are in the first person, it often leads to the misconception that they portray Arunagiri's personal life or experiences. **Hence we would do well to remember, throughout this study, that they do not refer to, and should not be confused with, the personal life or experiences of the Saint himself.** Because no one's experience or teaching can help others *to become like him*, though they can act as indicators or incentives for others; nor the experience of two persons can be identical, for the simple reason that no two persons' Karmas can be identical. So Swami Sivananda says: "Everyone should have convincing experiences of his own." That is the reason why in the whole of human history there is no second Lord Rama, Krishna, Jesus or Buddha, no second Vasishtha, Vyasa, Valmiki or Tulasidas, no second Sankara, Ramanuja, Kabirdas or Mirabai, no second Tukaram, Jnanadeva, Nayanmars, Alwars or Arunagiri, no second Ramakrishna, Aurobindo, Ramana Maharshi or Swami Sivananda, etc., etc., though these Masters had direct disciples/followers trained by them, and their teachings are followed by many even to this day. Otherwise this earth would have become heaven long before and hell would have been empty. No two persons' experiences can ever tally, nor can one's experiences help another except to a small extent. Why, even our own experience does not help us much! How many times we do wrong/unbecoming things and suffer, and then we decide we will be careful not to do that again. But within a short time we do repeat them almost helplessly! Therefore, Arjuna asked Lord Krishna: "O Lord, impelled by what does man commit sin, though against his wishes, constrained as it were, by force?" (Gita: III-36). Everything seems to be a mystery!

Lives of Saints provide great inspiration and guidance to mankind; we try to follow them, yet we cannot become like them. Though human effort is necessary, only Divine Grace seems to be the solution. Hence the Bhagavad Gita concludes: "Wherever Divine Grace and human effort stand together, there are prosperity, victory, happiness and firm policy."

This esoteric significance, which is mostly based on what has been revealed to me in the course of my daily *Paaraayana* over the years, I offer unto men of learning, wisdom and experience, in whose hearts Lord Guhan specially resides, for their research and acceptance of what is worthwhile in it. I am fully conscious that this is only an initial attempt at bringing out the esoteric significance and it may need further improvement.

May Lord Skanda bless us and lead us to be One with Him, is my prayer.

N.V. Karthikeyan

THE GLORIOUS LIFE OF THE SINNER-TRANSFORMED-SAINT ARUNAGIRINATHAR

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INTRODUCTION

Prostrations, adorations and salutations to the Supreme Being, Lord Skanda, Gurudev Swami Sivanandaji Maharaj and Saint Arunagirinathar -- at Whose Feet this is offered as humble flowers of worship.

The *Kaumaras*, -- one of the six cults or sects of the Hindus, -- regard and worship Lord Kumara, Skanda, Shanmukha or Karttikeya as the Supreme Being. And Saint Arunagirinathar is revered as one of the foremost among the *Acharyas* or spiritual teachers (Gurus) of the *Kaumaras*. He lived in Tiruvannamalai, the *Agni Kshetra*, -- one of the *Pancha Bhuta Sthalas*, which is sacred and famous for many other reasons as well. It is believed that a mere remembrance of Tiruvannamalai confers Mukti or Liberation.

As is the case with most of the saints and sages of the past, no authentic record of Arunagiri's life is available. Nothing definite is known about his birth, caste, etc. This has naturally led to much speculation about his life. And today we have a number of versions of Arunagiri's life and that too with countless variations in minor details. When one goes through them, one is at a loss to know which is right and which is not. The more one reads the more is the confusion created in one's mind. I say confusion because different authors say different things without any source, basis or authority, except their love

for the Lord and the Saint. Even the few books that I could obtain and go through made me hesitant to write on the life of Arunagiri, lest I should add to the confusion which is already there enough. But then I thought there is no harm if there is one more version, if it can clarify or clear some of the confusions and anomalies. Also, I could not help writing something about his life as I felt the book would be incomplete without the illustrious Saint's life, especially this being the only commentary in English on the *Kandar Anubhuti*. (*Refers to my book 'The Esoteric Kandar Anubhuti' to be uploaded so*on.) Hence I have tried here to collect and consolidate only those versions which have some reliable source, under three heads, --- the traditional account, the historical account and the internal evidence account – with, of course, some stress on the view that appeals to me as more intelligible, reasonable and supported by some kind of evidence, and I leave it to the readers to take what appeals to them. Whatever it be, one thing is certain that Arunagiri was a saint of no ordinary attainment as could be assessed from a study of his different works.

THE TRADITIONAL ACCOUNT

This has come down to us through generations by way of hearsay. This is mostly based on the earliest written poetic-work on the life of Arunagiri, entitled the "*Arunagirinatha Swamigal Puranam*" (also known as '*Pulavar Puranam'*) by a saintly Swami, called Thandapani Swamigal (who also goes by the names of Sri Murugadasa Swamigal and Tiruppugazh Swamigal – 1839-1898), composed about the year 1865. It is as follows:

Arunagiri was born in Tiruvannamalai, Tamilnadu, and is believed to have lived sometime in the middle of the fifteenth

century A.D. He was the son of a *Daasi* (dancing-girl or courtesan) called *Muthu* and had an elder sister by name *Aadi*. It is also said he was born to Muthu from the famous mystic saint of Tamilnadu, Pattinathar by name, in an unusual manner.

When Arunagiri attained the age of five, he was put to school. At his seventh year of age his mother passed away. She loved the boy so much that while she was on the death-bed, she entrusted him to the care of her daughter (i.e., the elder sister of Arunagiri) with specific instructions not to do anything that would displease him. Arunagiri's sister understood the anxious mental condition of her mother and gave her a word of promise that she would leave nothing undone to please Arunagiri and keep him happy.

As Arunagiri grew in age, he found the company of women more pleasing than his studies which he virtually neglected and sought the pleasures of enchanting courtesans. Slowly, he became a confirmed debauch. His sister who came to know of this conduct of Arunagiri tried her best to extricate him from the traps of public women. But nothing could prevent Arunagiri from his infatuated love for them. He must have his ways at any cost. The poor sister could not do anything drastic, lest she should be harsh to Arunagiri or displease him, which would mean breaking her promise to her mother. Thus did Arunagiri indulge in sex heedlessly and depleted all the wealth hoarded by his mother. Slowly he began to snatch away, one by one, the ornaments of his sister, sometimes with her knowledge and sometimes otherwise. The helpless lady could do nothing except pray to the Lord to save Arunagiri. In the meantime, Arunagiri contracted many diseases and suffered much. Yet he would not learn a lesson. He squandered all the wherewithal of his sister and left her a complete pauper. But he would yet

demand money from her to satisfy his sexual appetite and if she pleaded helplessness, he would threaten of sinking before her very eyes. In spite of her being reduced to this most pitiable condition, she could not imagine of displeasing Arunagiri. But, now she was utterly helpless. She grew desperate and said: "Brother! I had been helping you with all that I had. But now I find no means to help you. Yet I cannot think of displeasing you. Brother, tell me what can I do? Well, only one means is left now. Though we are born of the same mother, our fathers are different. Hence, the pleasure that you seek from a woman, you can find with me!" She would have continued, but her throat choked; she became silent. Lo! These words entered Arunagiri's heart like sharp arrows and shook his very being so fundamentally that he repented with a contrite heart for all his past misdeeds and wept bitterly. And in a moment he decided to put an end to his life as expiation for all the sins committed by him. Before his sister could understand as to what was happening to Arunagiri, he ran post-haste, climbed the tower of the Arunachala Temple, repented with an honest feeling, cried aloud the Name of the Lord, "Muruga, Muruga, Muruga", and jumped down, to put an end to his miserable existence and thereby be freed from sins.

Who can understand the ways of the Lord! Ere Arunagiri fell on the ground, there stood Lord Murugan with his outstretched hands and held him in His warm embrace. With His *Vel*, the Lord wrote His sacred Mantra on Arunagiri's tongue, gave him a Japa Mala and commanded him to sing His glories. The Lord then disappeared. Arunagiri stood there totally transformed. He was God-intoxicated out and out, and started on a pilgrimage to all holy places, singing the 'Glory of God' (*Tiruppugazh*), wherever he went, enjoying various kinds of divine experience at different places.

THE HISTORICAL ACCOUNT

In his work "*Saasana Tamizhk Kavi Charitam*", Rao Saheb M. Raghava Iyengar has given a detailed account of his researches, with appropriate authorities, based on certain Sanskrit works and inscriptions around Tiruvannamalai which reveal many interesting facts about the early life of Arunagiri. The salient features of his research may be summarized as follows:

It is almost an accepted fact that Arunagiri belonged to the time of Villiputturar, the author of the Tamil *Mahabharatam*. Villiputturar lived during the same time as the *Irattaiyar* (the twin-poets) whose period is the middle of the 14th century.

Arunagiri, in his Tiruppugazh, refers to two persons, – (1) a king who ruled during his time, as Pravudadeva Maharaja; and (2) the head of a Mutt, as Somanathan. Based on Arunagiri's description of the political condition prevailing then, it can be assumed that the king referred to by him should be Pravudadeva Raya II who ruled during the earlier part of the 15th century. As regards the time of Somanathan, he is believed to have lived about 1370 A.D., based on an inscription in the wall of the Siva Temple at Puttur. It is also ascertainable that the said Somanathan was one of the foremost among the Sivacharyas, -- learned Vidvans and Gowda-Brahmins, -- who came from North India and settled in Mullandiram and Devikapuram sometime earlier. Considering the above data, the author concludes that Arunagiri's time should be between that of Pravudadeva and Somanathan, i.e., between the close of the 14th century and the beginning of the 15th century.

From other inscriptions it is learnt that from amongst these Gowda Brahmin scholars and Pandits, some were talented

Sanskrit poets and were called as "Dindima Kavis". Historians[2*] hold that our Arunagiri is a descendant of these Dindima Kavis and he is himself referred to as such in one of the Sanskrit works of his posterior, entitled *Saluvabhyudayam*, who says that his father, Arunagirinathar by name, was a "Sarva-Bhauma Dindima Kavi", an "Ashtabhasha Paramesvara", a past master in composing Chitra Prabandha, and one greatly revered by the three Tamil kings, -- Chera, Chola and Pandya. Sri Raghava Iyengar proves, from internal evidences and coincidence of time, place, etc., that the Arunagirinathar referred to in the above Sanskrit work is our Arunagiri, the author of Tiruppugazh and others works.

Further, there is an inscription of 1550 A.D. in the Siva temple of Mullandiram which records the gift of a piece of land by a Brahmin lady to erect a small altar to 'Annamalai Natha' inside that Siva temple. This lady is said to be a descendant of the Dindima Kavi Annamalai Natha. It is believed that the Annamalai Natha in whose memory the altar was built is our Arunagiri, because Arunagiri, being a divine-inspired poet and saintly soul of an extraordinary calibre, became so famous that many temples came to be dedicated to him and one of his descendants donated for one such in his very birth place, Mullandiram. From all these it is proved and held that Arunagiri belonged to a Brahmin family of Mullandiram near Tiruvannamalai.

One objection to this view is: though Arunagiri is referred to as Dindima Kavi, etc. in the Sanskrit work of his son (to

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[2*] *Most prominent among them being the late Sri T.A. Gopinatha Rao who has published a lengthy article in the 'Indian Antiquary' of 1918.*

which facts there are corresponding internal evidences in the works of Arunagiri), Arunagiri's greatness was not so much due to these factors but was due to his extraordinary devotion to Lord Murugan and his innumerable compositions of Tiruppugazh songs, to which there is no mention in the Sanskrit work. This objection does not seem to be a serious one because when a person is referred to, all aspects of his life need not necessarily be mentioned. So long as the facts mentioned about Arunagiri in the Sanskrit works do not contradict any of the facts available about him, it can be safely taken as authentic, for no description of a person can be complete. That he was an expert in composing as a Chitra Kavi, that he was a Dindima Kavi and that he was revered and worshipped by the three kings, -- all which are fully relevant to Arunagiri, -- are facts which can be substantiated from his Tiruppugazh and other works. Again, if all these do not refer to our Arunagiri, who is he that is referred to by these? There seems to be no one else of that period to whom all these can be attributed. To simply say that these do not refer to our Arunagiri would be a meaningless objection unless the existence of another person to whom these refer can be proved. It cannot be that someone else was, who was such a great poet as to be called as Dindima Kavi, expert in composing poems as a Chitra Kavi and worshipped by the great Tamil kings and yet whose name or life-history or any of his works is not available on record. If these were really to refer to such a great person other than Arunagiri, something about him or at least some of his works must be available for reference, somewhere. Hence, in the absence of any such thing as this, these details may be taken, in all probability, to refer to Arunagiri, the author of Tiruppugazh and other works, and it can be safely regarded as such.

THE INTERNAL EVIDENCE ACCOUNT

This is based on Rao Bahadur V.S. Chengalvaraya Pillai's Tamil work "***Arunagirinathar**: Varalaarum Noolaaraichiyum*" **அருணகிரிநாதர்**: வரலாறும் நூலாராய்ச்சியும் – "Arunagirinathar: Life and research on his works", published in the year 1947. Our revered and scholarly Pillai Avl has done a tremendous work, a novel and original thought of his, in codifying the "Murugavel Panniru Tirumurai" (Complete works of Saint Arunagirinathar) corresponding to the 'Saiva Panniru Tirumurai', for which we are indebted to him. According to his research based on internal evidences of the Tiruppugazh and other works of Arunagiri, the life of the Saint, in his above work, is somewhat like this:

"Apart from the fact that Arunagiri lived in Tiruvannamalai, during the time of Pravuda Deva Maharaja who ruled that territory in 1450 A.D., no internal evidences are available to say anything definite about Arunagiri's caste, his parents, and his early life. Hence this research work is written based on information available in his works and what others who came after him have said about him.

"Arunagiri was acquainted, even from his younger days, with the earlier Tamil works, such as the Tevaram, Tirumantiram, Tirumurugaatruppadai, Tirukkural, etc. He had the skill and capacity to compose poems and he was a devotee of Lord Murugan. As fate would have it, he fell a victim to the evil traits of courtesans and lost all his property in debauchery. Utilising his talents of composing extempore songs, he earned wealth only to please his paramours. He was finally overpowered by poverty and incurable diseases (leprosy, etc.) which took heavy toll on him, and he felt ashamed over his own plight.

"Realising his condition and also due to the meritorious deeds of his earlier lives, an elderly pious person appeared before Arunagiri and advised him to do penance and contemplate on the six-faced Lord, Shanmukha. But, he paid no heed to this saintly instruction and wasted his life for some more time, only to be ridiculed by his kinsmen and townsmen. Thus some time passed.

"But, time is a great healer. The time for fruition of his past meritorious deeds approached and his mental attitude, too, underwent a change. He repented for his ill-spent life and for not having acted up to the advice of the pious person. He, therefore, offered up a prayer to Lord Murugan, sat near the big tower (Gopuram) of the Arunachaleshwarar temple at Tiru-vannamalai and commenced Sadhana in right earnest, but to no effect. He then decided upon a plan, that of putting an end to his life, and to this end he climbed the temple-tower and dropped himself down.

"Lord Murugan, whose eternal 'dedicated' servant Arunagiri was, held him in His arms and saved him from death. The Lord then gave him His Darshana – being surrounded by His devotees, Veda-chants resounding, and dancing of His Peacock. The Lord addressed him as '*Arunagiri-Naatha*', showered his side-glance grace, granted Feet-Touch, wrote His six-lettered Mantra on Arunagiri's tongue, and imparted knowledge of the Tamil language in its three aspects of prose, poetry and drama. He also gave Arunagiri a Japa-Mala (rosary), removed his *Mala* (impurities) and *Maya* (ignorance), gave *Mowna-Upadesa*, taught him the different Yoga-paths or techniques, imparted Upadesa on *Jnana-Marga*, and revealed the highest secret of *Pranava* or *Omkara*. The Lord then commanded Arunagiri to sing His praises and, when the latter

pleaded his ignorance, the Lord Himself gave the first line, as follows, and disappeared:

Muttait Taru Pattit Tirunagai
(Attikkirai! Sattich Saravana!
Muttik Koru Vittug Gurupara! – Ena Odhum

"O Moksha-conferring Lord! O Lord of Deivayanai who shines
With smile-divine and teeth pearl-like set!
O Saravanabhava, Sakti-Vel holding!
O Guru Supreme! O Seed (Source) for Moksha!
–Thus praising")

With the grace of the Lord, Arunagiri completed the song in no time. At that very place where Arunagiri was saved by the Lord, at the bottom of the *Gopuram* (tower), a temple is dedicated for Lord Murugan, with an idol of the Saint with palms joined in a prayerful mood. It is called the '*Gopuraththu Ilayanaar Koil*'. (Further story of Arunagiri continued on page lxxii)

It is worthwhile to record that our revered and late Sri V.S. Chengalvaraya Pillai has quoted authorities for each and every one of the facts mentioned above from the nook and corner of Arunagiri's works and also from other sources, all which reveal his high scholarship, deep knowledge and devotion to God. However, it is astonishing to note that he has knowingly omitted certain vital facts which, of course, he has admitted in the very Preface of the book itself. He says, in the Preface:

"The life-history of Arunagirinathar is being narrated in many ways by hearsay stories. Sri Murugadas Swamigal who has sung the '*Pulavar Puranam*' and many other devotees have told the story as they have heard and as inspired by the Lord from within their hearts. There is no way of saying for certain what the real history is. Those who wish to know these hearsay or

'*karna-paramparai*' stories may read their works. (*Note: By this is implied that Sri Pillai does not give credence or authenticity to hearsay or 'karna-paramparai' stories*.) The life-history I have written in this work is, as far as possible, based on internal and external evidences. Just as Sekkizhar Swamigal has written the biographies of the three saints --- Sambandar, Appar and Sundarar --- with the help of the hints available from the '*Thevaaram*' (their works), even so is my wish to write the history of Arunagiri's pilgrimage, etc., based on his Tiruppugazh and other works.

"As we cannot with any certainty say that the printed Tiruppugazh songs are Arunagiri's own words, and as it was the wont with the Tamil saints to depict themselves as being caught up in Maya, though really unaffected by it, for the sake of teaching to the world, I have consciously omitted even certain internal evidences afraid of quoting them as referring to Arunagiri's life, as for instance:

1. In Tiruppugazh verses [3]**T-392: '*Manaiyaval Nagaikka'*; T-752: '*Maattirai Yaagilum*'; and T-1301: '*Manai Makkal sutra'*; though Arunagiri's words are very, very clear to prove that he led a life (of *Grihastha*) with wife, children, sister-in-law and other relatives, yet hesitating to boldly state as such I have omitted the same.

2. (a) As regards Arunagiri's caste, he condemns himself in T-26: '*Anicchang Kaarmugam*' as 'a low one who avowedly consumes meat'. From this, can one say he belongs to a meat-eating caste? And again, in verse 31 of the *Kandar Anthadi* he

[3] *** T. Nos. refer to Tiruppugazh numbers in Sri Piila's work "Murugavel Panniru Tirumurai"*

(Arunagiri) himself says, 'O Brahmins, who mercilessly kill goats and do *Yagas* or sacrifices!' Is he, who thus condemns Brahmins (of their acts of killing of animals), one belonging to the meat-eating caste? (See page lxv for reply)

(b) Further, in his work "Sasanat Tamizhkavi Charitam" Rao Saheb M. Raghava Iyengar refers to Arunagiri as 'Sarva-Bhauma Dindima Kavi', 'Ashta-Bhasha Paramesvara', etc. Now, if we propose to claim Arunagiri to be a Brahmin because there is a lot of the usage of Sanskrit language in his Tamil works, (it cannot be; since) we are led to think that to one who had obtained 'countless powers' due to the special grace of Lord Murugan, should the use of Sanskrit language present any difficulty?

"To avoid these confusions I have stated that Arunagiri's caste is unknown, being satisfied that he is a great *Tapasvin* and a Knower of Truth", concludes Sri V.S.C. Pillai[4***].

Now, let us consider the above points.

1. A free rendering of T-392: '*Manaiyaval Nagaaika*' would be:

Wife laughing in ridicule, all townsmen ridiculing,
all women-folk ridiculing; father and relatives
Dejected in mind, I also dejected in heart, all people
thoughtlessly using condemning words and speaking low of me,
Darkness enveloping my pondering mind, I thought: 'Is this the purpose of my having taken birth?' -----

[4] *** *I had no occasion to study the Tiruppugazh songs earlier. So when I read this preface of his, I was eager to have a first-hand knowledge of what Arunagiri says in the songs referred to in the preface as well as in all the other Tiruppugazh songs. I, therefore, felt it necessary to glance through them, at least, and in doing so many facts were revealed. Fortunately for me the Ashram's library had all the six volumes of Sri Pillai's "Murugavel Panniru Thirumurai" for my easy and ready reference*

And reflecting thus daily, when I cast off the body and soul, ----

Approaching me, Those Feet that You granted then,

O Lord, grant me again.

The song begins with the words 'wife laughing in ridicule'. While the ridicule of his wife, father, relatives etc., is the cause of Arunagiri's taking a decision to put an end to his life, Sri Pillai has taken the effect as authentic information but does not want to accept the cause as authentic! If the effect is authentic, the cause has also to be authentic. To take the effect as true but to cast away, ignore or doubt the cause, neither seems to be rational nor brings soundness to one's research.

Moreover the facts that Arunagiri decided to end his life and that he knew the different earlier Tamil works etc. are supported by a few Tiruppugazhs only. While these facts can be taken as relevant to Arunagiri's life, why not also take that Arunagiri was married and had wife, children, mother, father and relatives, --- a fact which Arunagiri says in unambiguous terms in not less than 30 places, i.e., in his Tiruppugazh poems as well as in his other works.

Further, it is said that it was the wont of great Tamil saints and poets to attribute to themselves the shortcomings of the masses and invoke the grace of God to condone their evils and shower His blessings; and this method they adopted as an effective means of transforming people, as the poems are given in first person, capable of touching the hearts of people when they recite them. It is, therefore, held by many that all the shortcomings enumerated by Arunagiri in Tiruppugazh songs need not necessarily refer to him and should not be taken literally. Sri V.S.C. Pillai also contributes to this view, and there is some truth in it. But this view is advanced primarily to relieve

Arunagiri of such evils as debauchery, etc., and not so much to deny that he was a householder; because while prostitution is an evil and sin, *Grihasthashrama* or the stage of householder is not an evil, crime or shortcoming. On the other hand, Grihasthashrama is a praiseworthy stage of life, more so according to the Tamil scriptures. It is, therefore, really un-understandable that Sri Pillai should accept that Arunagiri indulged in prostitution but not be prepared to accede that he led a householder's life. When remote and vague internal evidences are given due authenticity to support even minor facts, what is the harm in accepting that Arunagiri led a family life when there are umpteen evidences for the same? Will it diminish Arunagiri's greatness? Or, can we add an inch to his greatness in ignoring this fact? Perhaps to accept that he had wife and children might lend support to the acceptance of the fact that Arunagiri had a son and that he has referred about Arunagiri in one of his Sanskrit works and that a descendant of Arunagiri has donated for the construction of an altar for him at his native village Mullandiram, --- facts which are proved by historians based on inscriptions, etc., (as seen earlier)! Is it not strange that he who set forth to write the life of Arunagiri *based mainly on internal evidences* should ignore certain vital facts of life so conspicuously disclosed in his works!

Here we can have a useful and pertinent diversion. It is true that great men take upon or attribute to themselves the evils, shortcomings and weaknesses of the general masses, with the intention of educating and reforming the evil doers, and Arunagiri too has done so in some Tiruppugazh songs. (We will refer to such songs as **'attribution'**). This can be evident from such songs as T-121: '*Seeralasadan*'; T-180: '*Thitamili*'; T-183: '*Pancha Paadagan*'; T-576: '*Pulaiyanaana*'; T-611: '*Avaguna Viraganai*'; T-291: '*Thaakkamarukkoru*'; T-363:

'*Maalaasai Kopa*', etc., wherein he condemns himself in *general terms*, - as a sinner, an egoistic person, a fool, a good-for-nothing person, an uncultured, an unlettered, etc., etc., - and prays to the Lord for His grace. Such poems are 'attributions', no doubt, because the evils mentioned in these are of a general nature. Also, there are poems which can prove that he was well-versed in the earlier works of the Tamil and Sanskrit languages, that he was cultured, that he had practised Tapas in his earlier births, etc., all which will be contradicted if the above verses are to be taken literally. Since the condemnation in these Tiruppugazh songs is of a general nature, we can easily take these poems as 'attributions' and not literally as referring to himself.

But, all Tiruppugazh poems are not of this type only and Arunagiri cannot be said to merely take upon himself the evils, shortcomings and misdeeds of others, because there are also poems of quite a different type wherein he does not condemn himself in general terms as a low man, a fool, etc., but says something of a *purely personal nature*.

Take the Tiruppugazh '*Manaiyaval Nagaikka*' (T-392. See page li). Here is the moot question: **Why did Arunagiri jump from the temple tower to end his life?** Was it because he 'attributed' to himself the sins and wrong deeds of the masses and repented for them, and jumped? OR, repenting for his own sins and indulgence in debauchery? Again, was it because some townsmen indulged in debauchery and contracted diseases, and their wives laughed at their husbands that Arunagiri jumped from the tower? OR, because Arunagiri's own wife and relations laughed and ridiculed at him for his indulgence? Certainly this song is not an 'attribution'; it was

for his own wrong deeds, for which his wife and others ridiculed and laughed at him, that he jumped from the tower.

It is easy to glibly say that saints take upon themselves the sins, wrong deeds and weaknesses of others and Arunagiri also did so. But what is the ground reality? **When he jumped from the tower, was he already a saint? Or an ordinary man?** Of course, he was not a saint; not even an ordinary man, but a sinner of an unimaginable magnitude, --- though being married and with children, he succumbed to the wiles of prostitutes and indulged in them for years and years, squandered all his wealth to please them and contracted incurable diseases, being laughed at by the courtesans as well as his own wife and others, not wanted by anyone and dejected in his mind, feeling sorry for having wasted the precious human life, he jumped from the tower as a *Prayaschitta* or expiation of his sins. The Lord saved him and transformed him into a saint. He was not an ordinary man transformed into an ordinary saint but a horrible sinner transformed into an exceptionally gifted saint, *with a mission to fulfil*; so much so that none has spoken about 'truth' or 'facts' (both matters worldly and spiritual) as frankly as him. So, from then onwards, in utter gratitude, he not only sings the glory of the Lord in his Tiruppugazh songs but also gives vivid descriptions of his miserable experiences with the prostitutes, from whom the Lord saved him.

If it is the wont of saints to 'attribute' to themselves the weakness of the masses (though it is true with regard to simple weaknesses), how many other saints have spoken of being regular visitors to public women and given such graphic descriptions of intimate experiences with them in *countless verses*, by way of 'attribution' of others' weaknesses? If none, why? Only Arunagiri has done so, because they are his personal

experiences and not 'attributions'. Who else has spoken the 'truth' as Arunagiri has done? And so, saint Thayumanavar is all admiration for him for his frankness.

In many of his Tiruppugazh songs, which are rather more in number than the attribution-poems, Arunagiri vividly describes his different experiences with the prostitute women, ---- how they lure men, what they talk in privacy, how they fix the rates and offer measured (i.e., less or liberal) enjoyment commensurate with the wealth offered by men (T-515), what modifications their different limbs undergo before, at the time of and following the sexual act, what sounds they produce, what experiences the lover himself undergoes, etc., etc. One can clearly see that there is an element of *one's personal experience* in these poems. While the evils and wrong deeds of others, which are of a general nature, can be portrayed in oneself, *experiences* cannot be so done unless one has had them for oneself. Such poems as T-46: '*Angai Menkuzhal Aaivaar*'; T-287: '*Koonthal Avizhthu*'; T-329: '*Angai Neettiya*'; T-336: '*Kumutha Vaaikkani*': T-364: '*Megamenum Kuzhal*'; T-785: '*Paadagach Chilambodu*'; etc., can give ample testimony to the fact that these are Arunagiri's personal experiences. These cannot be equated with poems wherein one attributes to oneself the evils and wrongs of others.

Not only this; in certain Tiruppugazh songs Arunagiri vehemently criticises and abuses public women with such piercing, forceful and dirty words that they cannot be dubbed as mere 'attributions'. He must have undergone such immense suffering and torture at their hands that he scolds, abuses, criticises and curses them to his heart's content, *as though* to avenge for the harm they have done to him. But it should not be construed that he hates them. He could not help vividly

describing his experiences with them and give vent to his feelings; because, simply glorifying the Lord for the blessings He conferred on him will not be telling the 'whole truth' unless he also mentions the problems and sufferings that those blessings cured.

Arunagiri does not seem to be satisfied with criticising them in a few poems; he takes recourse to it again and again, and one wonders why? But, to understand this one has to go through **all** his Tiruppugazh songs, then this will become evident. So plentiful are such poems! *More than half of the 1300 Tiruppugazhs refers to the prostitutes.* Such must have been the immensity of his suffering at the hands of the fallen women that he could not rest satisfied with merely praising the Lord for having saved him from their clutches, but also had to show how much he had suffered. It may appear that he vehemently attacks them as though in a revengeful attitude or that he hates them. Far from it; he is merely saying 'facts' as they are. And telling the truth does not mean he hates them. Perhaps Arunagiri used this method to wean the minds of the promiscuous men from indulgence in them, by indirectly telling them what is behind their alluring smiles and flesh, as he has had first-hand experience of them. This can be evident from T-267: '*Thodaththulakkigal*'; T-269: '*Thiruttu Naarigal*'; T-677: '*Kanavaalan Koorvizhi*'; T-698: '*Kadiya Vega Maaraatha*'; T-884: '*Kuritha Nenjaasai*'; etc., etc. If one goes through these verses, he will not venture to say that these are 'attributions' or that Arunagiri is scolding the prostitutes for the sufferings undergone by others at their hands. *He did suffer himself, horribly.* Arunagiri, as we know, is famous for telling the truth as it is. No other saint would have confessed as truthfully as he has done, if he were to be in his position. It is for this reason

that saint Thayumanavar said, '*Aiyaa Arunagiri appaa unnaippola meiyaaga ore sol vilambinar yaar.'*

These verses also act like warning sign boards: "Beware! O unwary Fools!" Arunagiri, unlike all other saints, does not merely wish that others also enjoy the Bliss of God that he enjoys, but also does not want the unwary ones to suffer as he had suffered at the hands of those bewitching women --– யாம் பெற்ற இன்பம் வையகம் பெற; தான் பட்ட துன்பம் ஒருவரும் படாதிருக்க. Is he not "*Karunaikku Arunagiri*", --- Arunagiri for compassion?

Further, a scrutiny of such songs as T-392: '*Manaiyaval Nagaikka*'; T-509: '*Kumara Gurupara*'; T-513: '*Makara Merikadal*'; T-916: '*Tiruvuroopa Neraaga*'; etc., will leave no room to doubt that Arunagiri not merely led a family life but that his indulgence in debauchery was *real* and not a mere 'attribution', because the special favours conferred by the Lord, as acknowledged by the saint in these poems, are of a purely personal nature and were granted to Arunagiri and not to somebody else, and as these divine favours saved him from indulgence in prostitution, ridicule of his wife, etc., these facts cannot but be as much real and pertaining to Arunagiri as the favours obtained by him. It cannot be that the blessings mentioned were received by him and the evils which those blessings cured or removed are of someone else, i.e., these songs cannot be 'attributions'.

It is believed that prostitution was very rampant during Arunagiri's time. Though from a cultured family, he too fell a victim to it, lost his wealth and health, and was ridiculed by all. Dejected, when he jumped from the temple tower, the Lord saved him and ordained him to sing His glories. So it was part of his mission to help people not to fall into the net of the

prostitutes and also help retrieve those who have fallen; and show that there is salvation even for the worst of sinners. Hence, while showing his gratitude to the Lord for having saved him, Arunagiri devoted hundreds of Tiruppugazh in which he not only thanks Him but also exposes the courtesans and their treacherous behaviour by graphically describing his horrible experiences with them. To do so must have been the Will of God and *with a purpose*. Otherwise, who would imagine that in a holy scripture called 'Tiruppugazh' (Glory of God or the Divine) so much of voluptuous matter can be sung by a saint? What is the purpose? It is not single; it is manifold. As saint Thayumanavar very aptly said, no one has spoken the 'truth' (not only matters spiritual but also mundane and sensuous) like Arunagiri. Hence, ***first and foremost***, the songs in which he describes about his experiences with the prostitutes are ***autobiographical or personal*** in nature, i.e., they are his own and not 'attributions', which at the same time also give an inkling of the condition prevailing then. ***Secondly***, they give a clear ***warning*** to those young men who are likely to fall a victim, as if to say: "My friends, Beware! Don't be foolish and fall into their net. Don't do the mistake which I made and suffered untold misery." ***Thirdly***, many songs are meant ***to help retrieve*** those who have already fallen into their lure. They are those Tiruppugazhs in which Arunagiri vividly describes his deep involvement with the prostitutes and the sufferings and humiliation he underwent under their spell, and prays to the Lord to save him from that predicament: ---- T-1023 '*Irut-kuzhalaik*', T-108 '*Kaaraninthavaraip*', T-685 '*Kaarcchaar kuzhalaar*', T-118, T-172, T-134, T-979, etc., etc. When people, who are already fallen into their clutches and suffer, and want to free themselves but unable to do so (not having the will-power), hear/sing those songs, they touch their hearts as they

exactly portray their condition. They lift them up from their state of helplessness and infuse hope into them. Then they start singing those songs, praying fervently from their hearts. The Lord cannot but hear such prayers and eventually they are saved from the prostitutes. ***Fourthly***, in some of the Tiruppugazhs Arunagiri profusely thanks the Lord for granting His Feet or such other blessings which saved him from attraction for sex and the courtesans: T-426 '*Paaravida mutthappa*', T-360 '*Kaamaatthiramaagi*', etc., etc. These and similar songs are meant for those who have been saved by the Lord in some way; when they sing such songs, they are like ***gratitude-filled thanks-giving*** to the Lord and also they act as safeguards against falling back into the evil way once again. ***Fifthly***, there are songs which simply glorify the Lord without any reference to attraction of sex, etc: T-106 '*Apakaara ninthai*', T-168 '*Kadalai poriyavarai',* and other categories.

Thus, we find a curious mixture of all the above categories even in the few compositions given in the span of a few days in every town/place. Unless we understand them in the above manner, it is difficult to explain the mixed nature of Tiruppugazhs. Inability to see in the above light made one author to remark: "Among Arunagiri's compositions, those that do not contain prayers to overcome the attractions of sex or the fear of death, may be said to have been sung after he attained Brahmic wisdom." Then, how will he explain when in one song Arunagiri thanks the Lord for having saved him from sex-attraction and in the very next song he prays to Him to rescue him from the courtesans, given in the same town within a few days' time or even on the same day? And, again similar songs are given in the next and subsequent places! Does it mean that he attained Brahmic wisdom in one place, then lost it, and again attained it in the next place and lost it, again and again! No,

because, Brahmic wisdom attained once can never be lost. The songs he gave in each town or area were primarily meant to help the people of the different category of that town/area. Hence we find so much repetition of the descriptions of courtesan women, their behaviour, sufferings from them, prayer for and freedom from their clutches by Lord's grace, etc. in his Tiruppugazh songs, as these songs were given during his pilgrimage, at different places. It is like a learned speaker giving talks on the same subject at different towns, almost repeating what he said in the earlier towns again and again, though with some minor changes, *as the audiences are different.*

So we find this assortment of songs to cater for the needs of people in every situation. It is not that all the songs are meant for everybody or for one and the same person at the same time. Some songs will appeal to some at one time, and other songs at another time. But every Tiruppugazh is calculated to help someone or the other, at some time or the other. Which Tiruppugazh or a verse of Arunagiri's other works will touch whose heart and transform him and when, we do not know. It was the Tiruppugazh (T-817: *Vangaara Maarpilani*) sung by a *Daasi* (courtesan) before the Lord of Palani during a festival, which the 38 year old family-man Ardhanari happened to hear, that sent a thrill in him and transformed him into the famous saint 'Vallimalai Sri Sacchidananda Swamigal'.

Thus, Arunagiri's involvement with the prostitutes was real and the Tiruppugazh songs are primarily the out-pourings of his personal experiences with them from which the Lord saved him, but also calculated to help the masses in different ways. Arunagiri himself says in unambiguous terms that his entanglement in the meshes of public women was due to his

past deeds and as ordained by Brahma (T-584: '*Vidhiyathaagave*'; T-842: '*Thodutha Naal Mudhal*'). It is worth remembering Saint Thayumanavar's words every now and then:

Aiyaa Arunagiri Appaa! Unnaippola Meiyaaga Ore Sol Vilambinar Yaar? ---

"O Arunagiri, my (spiritual) father! Who has, like you, uttered a word of truth?"

Thus we find that the Tiruppugazh songs are of various types: there are poems of self-condemnation by way of attributing others' evils of a general nature upon himself, to educate the masses and help turn their minds towards God (T-214: '*Charana kamalaala* ..'; T-109: '*Sivanaar manam* …'); there are poems of confession and repentance over his past evil life with the courtesans; many are poems seeking God's grace to be freed from sex-indulgence; there are gratitude-showing poems wherein he acknowledges the special favours conferred on him, which saved him from the clutches of prostitute women; there are poems of severe attack and criticism of public women, to serve as a warning to the unwary ones, etc. There are also poems which do not come under any of the above classifications. Some poems reveal the different kinds of spiritual experience obtained by Arunagiri purely out of Lord's infinite grace; there are poems which are only **praises of God** (T-100: '*Naada Vindu*'; T-270: '*Arakara Sivanari*'; T-366: '*Saravana Jaataa*'; T-101: '*Bodakantharu*'; T-654-I: '*Paramagurunaatha*'; T-730: '*Seethala Vaarija*'); there are poems which contain information on different subjects such as **diseases** (T-228: '*Vaadamodu*'; T-260: '*Irumaluroga*'; T-582: '*Valivaada*'); on **different Yogas** such as Jnana, Bhakti, etc., (T-190 '*Moolankilarodu*'; T-647: '*Naalu Sathuratha*'; T-652:

'*Mathiya Manguna*'; T-896: '*Pancha Pulanum*'; T-1114: '*Neerunila Mandaatha*'); **on music** (*Tala*), etc., etc. Hence we cannot bring all Tiruppugazh songs under a single category of 'attribution', etc., nor can we relegate one category of poems to another. They have to be carefully sifted and understood in their true perspective, which is, of course, not an easy task.

Though the Tiruppugazh songs are, in general, variegated in their nature and purpose in their first halves, their second halves are almost of a uniform nature in that they extol the glory of the Lord in diverse ways. He glorifies not only Skanda but also all the other Gods -- Lord Siva, Ganesha, Devi, Vishnu, Rama, and others. Hence the songs are called '*Tiruppugah*' – songs of praise (*Pugazh*) of God or the Glorious One (*Tiru*). They are not called 'Kandan Pugazh' or 'Murugan Pugazh' etc., whereas the other works are called 'Kandar Anubhuti', 'Kandar Alankaram' and 'Kandar Anthathi'.

The dexterity of Arunagiri in explaining the theme dealt with in each Tiruppugazh is such that he infuses life into it. His ability is *par excellence* and he is a past-master in the art of revealing facts and his experiences, --- whether temporal or spiritual, sensory or Divine, pleasing to the hearers or not --- in touching and lively expressions. This has so much endeared Arunagiri to Saint Thayumanavar that the latter exclaims:

Aiyaa Arunagiri Appaa Unnaippola
Meiyaaga Ore Sol Vilambinar Yaar? --- vaiyagattaar
Saatrarithentre satraar thannanaiyaai mukkanenthai
Naatrisaikkum kai-kaattinaan

"O Arunagiri, my (spiritual) father! Who has spoken a word like you so truthfully and precisely? People of the world got exhausted in their attempts, finding it difficult to express.

But you are unique in this art, without an equal to you. Our three-eyed Father (Lord Siva) showed His hands in all the four cardinal directions."

We may wonder: Why and to whom did Lord Siva show His hands in all the four directions? -- This is how He instructed the *Four Kumaras (Sanaka, Sanandana, Sanaatana and Sanat Kumara),* ***in silence***. Showing His hands in all the four directions was to indicate the All-pervading nature of Truth or God (i.e. Omnipresence) and that the Truth cannot be explained in words; and after thus showing His hands Lord Siva showed the '*Chinmudra*' and remained in Silence (Samadhi) which meant that Truth is 'Supreme Silence.' This instruction Lord Siva gave, not to worldly people like us but to the *Four Kumaras* (the four mind-born sons of Brahma) who were untainted by worldliness and needed no verbal instructions; they were ready and fit to Exprience Brahman, the Absolute, or Truth. And so, with that 'silent instruction' (*Sollara Summa Iru Enralum*), they entered into Samadhi. But the instructions of Arunagiri in his works were/are meant for the masses, for people who are immersed in worldliness and sensuality. Hence he had to 'speak' and there is none to equal him who has spoken so truthfully and precisely (in all matters).

Here we may take a little diversion. Some feel that Arunagiri's vehement attack of the public women and their treacherous behaviour is tantamount to hatred towards them. They say, "How can he hate women, chaste or otherwise, as it goes against his policy of '*Avirodha*' (which they translate as 'non-hatred')." They quote verse-25 of 'Kandar Alankaram' whose free-translation would be: (Arunagiri says:) "O Yama! I am a servant of the Lord of Tirucchendur Who has a Vel. Do you see the shining Wisdom-sword of *Avirodha* I have?

Beware! I will attack you and scare you, and cut you and throw you down, along with your mace and trident. If you dare, just come close to me at my arm's length and see what happens." Now, to tell someone that he will be cut to pieces and thrown down -- can we call it *Avirodha* or non-hatred? Is it love? Certainly not. So, the Wisdom-sword of *Avirodha* does not seem to mean non-hatred, but non-opposition. '*Virodha*' means opposition and *A-virodha* means non-opposition or 'no opposition', i.e., that which has no opposition or that which cannot be opposed by anything or against which nothing can stand. So it means nothing can stand before Wisdom; darkness or any dark force cannot oppose or stand against Light or Wisdom. Darkness can hide itself away from light; but if it dares to come close to light, we know what will happen to it; it will get dispelled, i.e., cut to pieces and thrown away. So, after Arunagiri got the sparkling Wisdom-sword of *A-virodha* or non-opposition by the Lord's grace, he was freed from the dark forces of lust and fear of death, and it does not mean he hated public women or Yama.

2. (a) As regards Sri Pillai's views on T-26 and Kandar Anthadi-31 (see page li), I may quote from Sri Sadhu Anuvanandaji's article "Life of Sri Arunagirinathar", published in the 'Sri Vallimalai Tiruppugazh Sacchidananda Swami Centenary Jayanti Souvenir' (1970), as follows:

"These are not formidable objections, for Arunagiri as a Gowda Brahmin may be permitted to partake of certain animal-food by the rules of his caste, but even then Arunagiri deplores his indulgence in it. Even a Brahmin could condemn animal-sacrifices in Yajnas as they have become scarce at the time, being disapproved by the better class of Brahmins. Thus, the statements that Arunagiri ate meat and yet condemned

Brahmins eating meat are neither irreconcilable, nor do they nullify our claim to Arunagiri being a Brahmin."

Apart from the above reply, we may offer one from another point of view, which would appear to be more appropriate and convincing, too:

Arunagiri's confession of 'eating meat with eagerness' only hints at the fact that he did belong, by birth, to a non-meat-eating caste (a Brahmin) and that his eating meat was only accidental, i.e., in and due to the company of courtesans "who drink and eat meat" (T-391: '*Soodu Kolai*'); "who are dirty ones that give stimulating and intoxicating food-stuffs as diet" (T-677: '*Kanavaalang-Koorvizhi*'); "who commit murders, who spoil the high and noble births of people, who have no regard for the caste-distinctions" (T-817: '*Vangaara Maarpilani*') -- whose association is the cause for the five great sins (*Pancha-Mahapatakas*) and many other vices, from which meat-eating cannot be excluded. And, Arunagiri's condemnation of the Brahmins' merciless acts of *himsa* or cruelty of killing goats in Yajnas, only, again, hints that though he belonged to the Brahmin caste, yet, he condemned it because it is an act of cruelty which deserves condemnation whether done by Brahmins or others. In both these statements, Arunagiri has stated *bare facts*, -- facts as they are, for which act he is outstanding. A Brahmin openly confessing that he ate meat, and at the same time condemning the Brahmins' merciless act of killing animals in sacrifice, enhance his greatness, for who but Arunagiri would venture to state facts so frankly? He is an exceptional type of person to whom disclosing facts thread-bare

is simple and spontaneous[5]*. While Arunagiri thus condemns the cruel acts of Brahmins, he, on the other hand, also praises them for the observance of their pious and prescribed religious deeds in T-625[6]**, '*Thaathu Maamalar*': "O Lord who is worshipped daily, as prescribed in the Vedas, without any flaw, and very ceremoniously by the 3000 *glorious Brahmins* (at Chidambaram)"; T-432, '*Vilaikku Meniyil*: "O Lord who is enshrined at Tirukkonamalai, where reside *eminent Brahmins* who are versed in the four Vedas which are eternal"; T-504: '*Kuruthi Pulaal*'; T-577: '*Bhoga Karpakkadavul*'; etc., etc.

2. (b) If Arunagiri's use of Sanskrit words is attributable to the 'countless powers' he attained due to the Lord's grace, can we not, with the same breath, say that his knowledge of the different earlier Tamil works referred to in Tiruppugazh, etc., is also due to the very same 'countless powers' conferred by God? Why should we, then, attribute them to Arunagiri? One would do justice in attributing all that is of any worth in Arunagiri to the Lord's grace, rather than to attribute certain aspects to the Lord and certain others to Arunagiri, which Arunagiri himself would feel shy to claim.

Arunagiri says, in T-432, '*Vilaikku Meniyil*': "O Lord Muruga, whose form is of the essence of the songs composed by Vasishtha, Kashyapa, Yogis well up in Tapas, Agastya

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[5] ** "O Arunagiri, who has spoken about truth as you have!" Arunagiri not only 'calls a spade a spade', but also calls 'an iron spade an iron spade', 'a steel spade a steel spade', and 'a golden spade a golden spade'.*

[6] *** This song was responsible for late Sri V.T.Subramaniya Pillai (father of Sri Pillai) to search for and publish the Tiruppugazhs, when he heard it quoted by the Brahmins of the Chidambaram Temple in support of their glory, in a court case.*

Muni, Idaikkaadar and Nakkirar!" While the songs composed by the latter ones are in Tamil, those of Vasishtha and others are in Sanskrit. It is, therefore, quite evident that Arunagiri was well conversant not only with the Tamil works of Idaikkaadar and others, but also with the Sanskrit works of Vasishtha and others.

Also, Arunagiri's mention of "*Munis* offering *Tarpana* (Oblations), uttering '*Aadityaaya*' (which means 'to the Sun-God'), doing the '*Gayatri Japa* and *Archana*' in the early morning, after a clean bath, facing the east" (T-508: '*Velaippol*') can be taken as sufficient proof of not only his knowledge of the Sanskrit language but also of his belonging to a caste to which these rituals are obligatory and with which he was naturally well conversant; for, otherwise, he could not have given them in such meticulous detail.

A critical study of his Tiruppugazh songs will, on the other hand, reveal, to our own surprise, that Arunagiri's knowledge of the Tamil language was conferred on him by Lord Skanda, whom he extols as the Tamil-God. "O Lord, *who gave me the glorious Tamil language* that I could daily sing the praises of Your radiant, Divine Feet," says Arunagiri, in T-214: '*Sarana Kamalaalayattai*'. We do not find Arunagiri acknowledging anywhere to this effect in regard to the use of Sanskrit in his works. It appears that Lord Murugan ordained Arunagiri to sing in the Tamil language, though he knew both the languages, giving him a special power to compose poems in the Tamil language when He gave the first line to start with. Perhaps, but for conferring this special power and ordaining him to sing His glories in the Tamil language, Arunagiri would have, in all probability, done it in the Sanskrit language itself in which he seems to have had a greater mastery even from his early life.

Yet his proficiency in, his knowledge of and his love for Sanskrit is so much that he could not resist the spontaneous overflow and lavish use of Sanskrit phrases and words, and even full stanzas, in many a Tiruppugazh, as well as in his other works. Such exuberant use of Sanskrit in Tamil works is also a special feature of Arunagiri's works and is rarely seen in the Tamil works of other saints. Hence we can conclude, with all emphasis, that Arunagiri's knowledge of the Sanskrit language was not due to the 'countless powers' conferred on him by the Lord, but that he was well-versed in both the Sanskrit and Tamil languages even from his early life, having been born in a Brahmin family.

And, if we are to accept that Arunagiri knew the Tirukkural, etc., merely because there is a direct or indirect mention of them *in a few places* in his works, we should also be charitable enough to accept that he knew the Vedas, the Upanishads, etc., to which also he makes reference *in innumerable places*. But, surprisingly, Sri Pillai has failed to record all these facts, i.e., that Arunagiri was well-versed in Sanskrit and that he knew the Vedas, Upanishads, etc. His research does not seem to be impartial, certain facts being intentionally omitted/ignored.

Just as the weaknesses, etc., mentioned in some Tiruppugazhs are 'attributions' and in some others are his personal experiences, even so may be the case with the diseases enumerated by him in Tiruppugazh songs, which is a huge list. Some of the general diseases like fever, cold, cough, head-ache, and many others mentioned in the Tiruppugazhs can be those suffered by all, while some serious illnesses are his own sufferings. It is not necessary that he suffered from all those diseases at one and the same time. We may safely assume that

he must have spent the best part of his youth (say from age 20 to 30 or 35 years) with the prostitutes and in those years he had suffered from many diseases, all which were cured by the Lord's grace instantly.

From a study of the above views, we may make an assessment of Arunagiri's early life as follows:

(a) He was a native of Mullandiram near Tiruvannamalai and a descendant of Gowda Brahmins who were learned scholars and poets, himself being a talented Sanskrit poet, called 'Dindima Kavi' (Sri Raghava Iyengar's research);

(b) He was well-versed in the earlier Tamil works such as the Thevaaram, Tirukkural, Tirumantiram, etc. (Sri V.SC Pillai's research work);

(c) He was highly learned in the Sanskrit language and had deep knowledge in the Sanskrit literature, because he makes free use of Sanskrit words and phrases in his works as also there is a lot of reference to the Vedas, Upanishads, Gayatri-Mantra, Tarpana, etc., in his compositions (as explained above).

It cannot be argued that the use of Sanskrit words, etc., was due to the 'countless powers' conferred on Arunagiri by the Lord; because, the same argument will hold good in respect of item (b) above. Hence, if we are to take internal evidences as authentic in respect of item (b), we cannot help accepting item (c) as true;

Items (b) and (c) suggest that Arunagiri must have hailed from a highly religious and cultural family whose tradition it is to educate their children in both the Tamil and Sanskrit languages, i.e., he belonged to a Brahmin family.

(d) Being a native of Mullandiram, he lived in Tiruvannamalai. This may be due to his parents' settlement

there in his boyhood for his education, or his settlement there after his marriage for his livelihood. That he lived in Tiruvannamalai where he succumbed to the wiles of the public women, and the Lord saved him when he tried to commit suicide is evident from many Tiruppugazh songs, and is beyond doubt;

(e) Even before he was ordained by the Lord to sing His glories, Arunagiri had the ability to compose poems, which he made use of to earn wealth to be given to his paramours (T-146: '*Irukanaka*'; T-494: '*Arivilaap*'; etc.). {*Some authors, to create confusion, say that some of those songs which Arunagiri composed earlier to earn wealth might have been mixed up with the Tiruppugazh songs. We should not forget that the Tiruppugazh songs were given after ordainment and are divine-inspired and are in 'praise of the Lord' and not of misers (as could be seen clearly in the above 2 songs). The Tiruppugazh songs have a flavour of their own, they are divine-inspired out-pourings; whereas the earlier songs were intellectual compositions and they can be no match to the Tiruppugazhs and cannot be confused or mistaken one for the other*.}

(f) He was a married man and had wife, children, father, mother, and in-laws (T-392: '*Manaiyaval Nagaikka*') and yet he fell a victim to the lures of prostitute women (T-132: '*Thakara Narumalar*'; T-436: '*Seelamula Thaayaar*'), which was due to his Prarabdha Karmas or fate (T-584, '*Vidhiyathaagave*'; T-842, '*Thodutha Naal Mudhal*');

(g) Dejected and fed up with the wretched life of debauchery which resulted in contracting many diseases and poverty, and also the ridicule of his wife, kinsmen and even his paramours, Arunagiri decided to put an end to his life (T-392: '*Manaiyaval Nagaikka*'; T-394: '*Kothi Mudhithu*'); and

(h) When Arunagiri attempted suicide, the Lord held him and conferred various blessings on him: T-392: '*Manaiyaval Nagaikka'*; T-513: '*Makara merikadal*'; T-515: '*Murugu cheri kuzhal*'; etc.)

AFTER ORDAINMENT

We continue with the 'Internal Evidence Account' of Sri Pillai, from where we left (page xlix). When Arunagiri fell from the temple-tower, the Lord saved him and ordained him to sing His glories by Himself giving the first line. Arunagiri at once completed the song. Being cured of all physical ailments and purged of inner impurities, his heart was brimming with devotion. He was in a highly ecstatic mood. He was totally transformed. He adopted the life of a renunciate. The erstwhile sinner shone now as a saint. He was full of expression, love and supreme devotion. By the special blessings conferred on him by the Lord, as the waters of a reservoir rush forth when the flood-gates are thrown open, wisdom and love flowed through the saint in the form of *Tiruppugazh* songs. He poured forth poems in exquisite Tamil, singing the glories of the Lord in diverse ways. He was God-intoxicated out and out. The residents of Tiruvannamalai and neighbouring areas revered him and joined him in singing his songs. His fame and glory spread everywhere as an exceptional devotee of Lord Murugan and as a great Yogi. The king of the country, Pravuda Deva, also evinced great love and devotion towards Arunagiri and honoured the Saint in his court. He requested Arunagiri to give him the darshana or vision of Lord Murugan Whose vision he had the good fortune to have, even as Somaasimaara Nayanaar had requested Sundaramurti Swamigal.

In support of the king's request, Sri Pillai says, there is a '*karna-paramparai*' story, as follows: (Note: Sri Pillai has, in

his Preface (see page l), rejected the 'karna-paramparai' stories as unauthentic. Why should he resort to it now? The story is both **irrelevant and unwarranted**, as we will see at the end of the story -- page lxxviii.)

The Myth of the contest with Sambanthandan

The '*karna-paramparai*' story, though there is no internal evidence for it, is as follows:

There was a great Devi-Upasaka, --- a devotee of the Divine Mother, --- *Sambanthandan* by name. He was an ardent Jain and had intimate friendship with the king Pravuda Deva, for his own ends. The wide-spread fame of Arunagiri and the special honour accorded to him by the king kindled Sambanthandan's jealousy towards Arunagiri, as he feared he would no more get the king's favour. He, therefore, struck upon a cunning plan to defame Arunagiri. He approached Pravuda Deva and said: "You should be devoted only towards him who can make the Deity he worships appear in an open assembly." Pravuda Deva could not tolerate this jealous attitude of Sambanthandan. He conveyed it to Arunagiri who agreed to it, taking it as the will of God. Accordingly elaborate arrangements were made and a big assembly was convened at the courtyard of the Arunachaleshwarar Temple. The king with his consort, nobles and the public at large gathered there to witness this unusual contest. Sambanthandan made all sorts of feats, pomp and show to manifest his Ishta Devata, -- *Kaali*, -- but failed. Now came Arunagiri's turn. He made no special efforts, but sang a Tiruppugazh song, which begins with '*Athala Sedanarada*' (T-1056). A free-translation of the song is thus:

"O Lord of Lords! Come dancing, O Lord, come dancing in such a way that when You dance, **everything** dances, --- the

Aadisesha dances in the nether worlds; the mount Meru dances on the earth; Kaali dances with Lord Siva, the Bull-Rider; the Ganas of Siva dance around Him; the sweet Sarasvati dances; Brahma, who is seated on the lotus, dances; the Devas dance; the moon dances; your mother-in-law, Lakshmi Devi seated on the red-lotus, dances; your father-in-law, Lord Vishnu Who showed His Visvarupa (cosmic form), dances; and the Peacock (on which You ride), too, dances. O Son-in-law of Lord Vishnu (i.e., Lord Skanda), who (as Lord Krishna) helped Bhimasena (one of the five Pandava brothers)! ……..O Lord Muruga who resides in the heart of Pravuda Deva Maharaja making it melt and dance in joy! Come dancing, O Lord, please come dancing, with the Peacock, too, dancing."

No sooner did Arunagiri finish the song than the Lord appeared before the assembly, on a dancing peacock, by manifesting Himself from a pillar, holding the shining Vel in His hand and gave *Darshana* to the delight of the king and the assembled audience. (Hereafter we shall refer to this as the '**Event**'.) These facts, viz., that the Lord appeared **in no time**, on a dancing peacock and gave Darshan **to all,** are revealed by Arunagiri himself in two of his other Tiruppugazhs (T-331 and T-755). The pillar from which Lord Murugan appeared in the Mandapam where the assembly was convened is to be seen even today in the Arunachaleswarar temple. A small shrine is dedicated there to Lord Murugan. As He came out of a *Khamba* or pillar, the shrine is called "*Khambattu Ilayanaar Koil*".

The two Thiruppugazh songs are: (i) In T-331 -- *Arivaiyar Nenjurugaappunar* (sung at Thiruchiraappalli) Arunagiri says: " O Guru Supreme, Who appeared on His peacock, holding in His hand the shining Vel which destroyed the (Krauncha) mountain, and accepted me -- Thou did that graceful act (at

Thiruvannamalai) which was witnessed **by the whole world**." (ii) In the second song T-755 – *Thirumozhi Uraipera* (*Ulaginil anaivargal*) (sung at Vruddhachalam) he says: "O Valourous Peacock-Rider, You once came, **in a fraction of a second**, and helped me in Thiruvannamalai, which earned the praise of **all the people of the world**" (The Lord helped Arunagiri by responding to his prayer and giving His Darshana to the king and the assembled devotees.)

It is held by most authors that when the Lord gave Darshana, by the brilliance of His appearance the king lost his eye-sight. We shall revert to this subject later. (see page lxxxiii)

This 'Event' and the two Thiruppugazhs quoted above reveal the true history of the Saint's life. The crux of the matter is: **When did this 'Event' take place?** Did this take place ***before*** Arunagiri left Tiruvannamali on his *Sthala-Yatra* (pilgrimage tour of places throughout India), **OR *after*** completing the pilgrimage, at the fag end of his life? ***This is the crucial point!***

From the '*Athala Sedanarada*' (T-1056) and the two Thiruppugazh songs mentioned above (which Arunagiri gave during the pilgrimage tour) we can easily deduce that:

(i) In the '*Athala Sedanarada*' song there is reference only to 'king Pravuda Deva, in whose heart Lord Murugan was residing and making it dance in joy.' It was his pious wish to have the Lord's Darshana and he requested Arunagiri for the same. Accordingly, when Arunagiri sang the '*Athala Sedanarada*' song the Lord appeared. There is not even the slightest indication in that or any of the other Tiruppugazhs that it was a contest with someone or that Sambanthandan was involved in it. Sri Pillai taking refuge in the '*karna-paramparai*' story and bringing Sambanthandan into the scene

and making *it appear as a contest* is **irrelevant and unwarranted**. There is absolutely no need. It seems to be purely for the purpose of making Arunagiri take the form of a parrot, later on, for which Sambanthandan is needed and for which he is brought into the picture now!

(ii) This 'Event' did take place **before** he commenced his pilgrimage tour; otherwise he could not have referred to it in the two songs (T-331 and T-755).

(iii) Neither the king nor anyone else lost the eye-sight by the Darshana of the Lord, as there is no mention of it either in these or in the other Tiruppugazh songs or his other works. On the other hand, from the saint's statement, "Thou did that graceful act (of appearing at Thiruvannamalai) which was **witnessed *by the whole world***" (T-331) and "You once came, **in a fraction of a second**, and helped me in Thiruvannamalai, which earned the praise of **all the people of the world**" (T-755), it is quite evident that none lost sight.

(Some may think that the above two Tiruppugazhs may refer to the Lord's appearance when Arunagiri jumped from the temple tower, to save him. But it cannot be, because when Arunagiri jumped from the temple tower, it was to commit suicide repenting for his sinful life; he did not pray to the Lord to appear or to save him, nor did he know/expect that the Lord would do so. The Lord appeared of His own accord most unexpectedly, even to Arunagiri's own surprise. Neither Arunagiri had announced that he is going to commit suicide nor invited the people to witness the event. Those who commit suicide do it silently, secretly. Where then is the question of '**witnessed by the whole world' (T-331)** or "**all the people of the world" (T-755)?** So these verses can NOT be taken to represent the appearance of the Lord when he jumped from the Gopuram, because then ***no one witnessed that incident***. It was only Arunagiri and the Lord, and none else. Also, if we refer to T-392 (*Manaiyaval Nagaikka*), Arunagiri says: *And reflecting thus daily, when I cast off the body and soul, ---- Approaching me, Those Feet that You granted then, O Lord grant me again,* and in T-394 (*Kothi Mudiththu*) he says: *When I tried to cast off the soul from the body, showing pity on me, wishing to grant me the blessed state, You blessed m*e. In these

two verses wherein he clearly refers to committing suicide (by 'jumping from the Gopuram'), he does not mention about the people witnessing the event. There is the small temple for the Lord at the very bottom of the Gopuram (*Gopurathu Ilayanaar Koil*) where Arunagiri was saved by Him, wherein also is an idol of the saint

It was only in the 'Event' which took place in a huge *sadas* (assembly) **convened** in the hall or Mandapam that it was witnessed '**by the whole world'** and '**all the people of the world**,' where the '*Kambathu Ilayanaar Koil*' is there.)

(iv) The 'Event' took place before Arunagiri went on pilgrimage {see (ii) above}. If we suppose that the king had lost his sight then and that Arunagiri went as a parrot and fetched the Parijata flowers from heaven to restore his sight and his body had been got cremated by Sambanthandan, as many authors hold, then Arunagiri remained as a parrot after that. In that case, there is no question of his going on pilgrimage or mention about the 'Event' in the above mentioned two songs, nor giving us thousands of Tiruppugazh songs. **So, it is evident and beyond any doubt or question that neither the king lost his sight nor Arunagiri ever became a parrot. These are mere stories based on hearsay without any basis or internal evidence.**

(v) The 'Event' was witnessed by a large gathering, perhaps the people of the town and nearby had gathered there to have Darshana of the Lord. It was not a private or limited gathering, which is clear from the word '*Jagamariyumpadi*' – ஜகமறியும்படி.

(vi) The Lord appeared *in the fraction of a second* (ஒரு நோடிதனில் வரு மயில்வீரா), without any delay. This falsifies the much adumbrated and dramatic scene introduced in the imaginary story of Devi holding Murugan and not allowing Him to go, and that Arunagiri sang the *Devendra Sanga*

Vaguppu and then the *Mayil Viruttham* when the Lord jumped from Devi's lap and hurried to the assembly.

(vii) The 'Event' could not have happened after the saint completed his pilgrimage (i.e., at the fag end of his life), because, then how could he have referred to it in the 2 songs mentioned above which he sang during his pilgrimage?

From the above analysis it would become very clear that all other versions of the 'Event' and connected matters (king losing eye-sight, Arunagiri-parrot going to heaven, etc.) are all concocted stories and not something that really happened. Because they are not real but concocted stories, there are innumerable versions of them, each author being free to say what he wants or as inspired from within. Though we do not give any credence to them, we shall have a look into these different versions to show how shallow they are, having no basis or evidence.

Different Versions of the Myth

Regarding the above 'Event', some hold that when Sambanthandan prayed to Kali to appear and She was about to leave, the little Murugan stopped her saying, 'Mother, how can you leave Me alone and go somewhere?' So She did not appear. But some say that Arunagiri sang the '*Devendra Sanga Vaguppu*' and prayed to the Devi not to appear. Some others say She appeared immediately before Sambanthandan and said to him that She could be seen by him alone and not by the king and others. Another version is that the Devi was bound by Her promise to Sambanthandan to give Darshana only for a period of twelve years which period was over just the day prior to the event and so She did not appear at all. He, however, requested Her to at least not allow Murugan to manifest Himself, to which She agreed. And so when Arunagiri sang the '*Athala*

Sedanarada' song, the Lord did not appear. He, therefore, sensed some mischief somewhere and through his Yogic vision found out that the Devi was holding Murugan as a small baby on Her lap and entertaining Him with Her conversations, thus preventing His appearance in the assembly. Arunagiri, it is said, sang the *Devendra Sanga Vaguppu* and then the *Mayil Viruttham* to which latter's tune a peacock danced before the Kali, and She, being enamoured of the melody of the music and the dance of the peacock, unconsciously loosened Her hold on Murugan when He jumped over to the peacock, hastened to the assembly and gave Darshana. (*This view is untenable, as we have seen that the Lord appeared* ***in no time****.)* The Lord cannot be bound or held in check by anything except the true love of His devotee, which can attract the Lord from any realm and manifest Him in no time on the physical plane. Moreover, to Arunagiri Lord Murugan was not merely the personal God or Ishta Devata (cult-God), He was also the Supreme Being. This is evident even from the above Tiruppugazh. Though the Lord is addressed as the son-in-law of Lord Vishnu, etc., which all point to the theological aspects of Him, He is asked to come dancing in such a way that when He dances, everything, everywhere, dances, including Brahma, Vishnu and Siva, and Kali dances with Lord Siva, the Bull-Rider; etc., which reveal that He is the Supreme Reality that is behind and beyond even the Trinity. This is amply made clear in another poem also (T-433, '*Agaramumaagi*' sung at Pazhamuthirsolai): "O Lord who is (the beginning of all things) like the *Akara* or the letter 'A' which stands first in the alphabets, who is the Lord of all things, who is beyond everything, who is the essence of all things, who is Brahma, who is Vishnu, who is Siva, who is beyond this Trinity; who is all things here, who is whatever thing anywhere is, and who comes as the sweetness (of all things)." Again in

the last verse of his treatise on God-Realisation, the '*Kandar Anubhuti*', Arunagiri gives the experience of a Jivanmukta who is established in *Sahaja-Samadhi Avastha* or perpetual God-Consciousness – for a Jivanmukta **everything is God**. He says: **"**O Almighty Lord Guha! O Supreme Being, Who comes (as all these which are) with form and without form, as what is and what is not, as flower and (its) fragrance, as gem and (its) radiance, as body (universe) and soul (universal spirit) (that pervades and animates it), as the rules of righteousness and Moksha (that is attained through them) (i.e., as the means and as the End), and as the Guru! Bestow Thy Grace (on all)." எல்லாமாயும் குருவாயும் வருகின்ற குஹப்பெருமானே, நீ எல்லோருக்கும் அருள் புரிவாயாக.

Here we can have a little diversion. Sometimes a doubt arises as to which cult did Arunagiri belong? Was he a *Kaumaara*, or a *Saakta* or a *Shaiva* or what? Arunagiri was a Saint of the highest Advaitic Realisation and all such saints belong to a class of their own, they belong to GOD (இறையோன் பரிவாரம்) and not to any particular cult, i.e., they are neither *Kaumaras*, nor *Saaktas*, nor anything else, though from our limited point-of-view we may dub them as this or that. In respect of all saints we say: "The bliss they enjoyed they want all of us to enjoy." – யாம் பெற்ற இன்பம் வையகம் பெற. The Advaita-Acharya Sankara, who is regarded as an incarnation of Lord Siva, instituted the *Shan-Mata* or the six cults as six ways of approach to and realisation of the same Goal, --- God, Supreme Being, Brahman or the Absolute. This he did as the taste, temperament and inclination of devotees differ, according to their practice from their earlier lives. As the six cults do not lead to different Goals but to one and the same Goal, they are meant to bring unity among the followers of the

different cults. Also, it implies that one cult is not superior or inferior to the other, as they all lead to the same Goal. Each and every cult has the transcendental (*Nirguna Brahman*, as the Goal) and relative (*Saguna Deity* worshipped, as the means) aspects implied in it. The transcendental aspect of every cult includes the relative aspects of all the cults and does not contradict them. Thus the saints who have realised the Absolute through any cult do not belong to that cult alone but to all of them. Cults are only paths or practices for the practitioners, not for those who have attained the Goal; also not for God, the Absolute. To which cult does Lord Murugan, or Devi, or Lord Siva belong? To which cult does Sankaracharya, who instituted the cults, belong? So is the case with Saint Arunagiri, Swami Sivananda and others. They do not belong to any cult but provide guidance to the followers of the different cults. Swami Sivananda gave initiation to devotees of all cults according to whoever is their Ishta Devata (cult) and guided them to realisation. He even allowed himself to be attired as Krishna, Siva, Devi, Murugan, Jesus, etc. when devotees so desired, to help them in their worship/meditation. Arunagiri has sung the glory of all the Deities in his Tiruppugazhs though they are primarily addressed to Lord Skanda. Even as God does not belong to any cult but all the cults lead to Him, so also Saints of the highest Advaitic Realisation do not belong to any cult but help followers of all cults to reach the Goal. They are interested in the welfare of **all** -- '*Sarvabootahite rataah'.* They belong to God, to the whole of humanity and their teachings are universal. They cannot be confined or limited to any particular cult. To dub them as belonging to this or that cult would be a poor understanding of them and not a proper respect paid to them.

To emphasise the unity among the cults he instituted, Sankaracharya also introduced it in the lives of his followers. So, the heads of Mutts appear as *Saivaites* wearing Vibhuti strips and Rudraksha Mala; sign letters of blessing as '*Narayana Smriti*' and repeat 'Narayana, Narayana' when devotees bow to them; and do daily Puja to the Divine Mother.

Now we continue the story. The Murugan that Arunagiri manifested was not so much the cult-God but the Supreme Reality that is behind the different manifestations. Hence, there should be no question of the Devi holding Skanda or vice-versa somewhere in Kailasa. It does not, however, mean that one God is inferior or superior to another. Every manifestation of God has different aspects: at least two, --- the Absolute and the relative. Lord Krishna was not merely the friend and charioteer of Arjuna but also the *Bhagavan* or Supreme God who gave the Gita-Upadesa as also showed Arjuna the *Visvarupa*. Similar is the case with all gods, - Lord Skanda, Devi, etc. The Lord is all aspects at once, and it is the attitude of the devotee with which the Lord is invoked, viz. *Sattvika, Rajasika or Tamasika,* that determines matters. Arunagiri had pure devotion and his invocation was not motivated by personal ends, while that of Sambanthandan was prejudiced and motivated. This accounts for the spontaneous manifestation of Lord Skanda and the non-appearance of the Devi, respectively. God is a slave of the devotee's love, whichever the God be, and whoever the devotee be. The incident only proves the greatness of Arunagiri and his pure love for God, which was equally great towards the Divine Mother, too, as can be seen from many of his Tiruppugazh songs. Incidentally, it may be mentioned that he had the blessings of the Divine Mother, too.

Under such circumstances, to say that the Devi was holding Murugan fast, preventing Him from coming to the assembly would at best disclose one's inadequate understanding of Arunagiri's love for Murugan as also his concept of God, which was one of the Supreme Reality behind everything. That is why Arunagiri says in the above Tiruppugazh, 'O Lord! Come dancing so that when You dance, Siva, Vishnu, Brahma, Kali, etc., --- **everything dances**!' *When such is the prayer, if Kali were really to hold Murugan fast, Arunagiri's prayer would have manifested not only Murugan alone but would have brought the Kali, too, with Him.*

Again there are many versions, according to the hearsay stories, as to what happened when Lord Skanda gave Darshana in the open assembly (from page lxxv). It is said that the king lost his eye-sight due to the divine brilliance which human eye cannot endure. It is unbelievable that in that large assembly **only** the king lost his eye-sight! If at all anyone, it should have been the evil-minded Sambanthandan and not the pious king.

Before we proceed further let us see whether anyone ever loses eye-sight by the Darshana of the Lord. Usually, devotees pine and pray for Darshana of the Lord and there are many devotee-saints (Nayanars, Azhwars, and others) who have had Darshana of the Lord, but none lost his/her sight. Moreover, it was not even the terrifying Vishwaroopa Darshana (Cosmic Form) **or** a Mass of Brilliant Light that the Lord showed in that *Sadas* (assembly) but the most enchanting form. We know Murugan is an embodiment of eternal youth and beauty, and with the dancing peacock nothing could be more soothing not only to the eyes but also to the heart and soul of those that were fortunate to have that Darshana which is rare to get. Even by the Vishwaroopa Darshana which Lord Krishna showed in the

assembly of the Kauravas and to Arjuna in the battle-field, no one lost his eye-sight. Even when Arunagiri fell from the temple tower and the Lord appeared, held him in His arms and saved him, he did not lose his eye-sight. On the other hand, Arunagiri's Wisdom-Eye (*Divya-chakshu or Jnana-chakshu)* got opened. *No one lost eye-sight by the Darshana of the Lord*.

The Myth of the Parrot Story

We proceed further. When the king lost his sight, one version is that at once Arunagiri gave *Bhasma* or the holy ash and brought back the eyesight. The other is that Arunagiri fetched the Paarijata-flowers from heaven and restored the king's vision. It is thus:

Having been defeated in the contest, Sambanthandan disappeared from the assembly in utter shame and left the kingdom. But his enmity to Arunagiri did not subside. He somehow wanted to do away with Arunagiri and so, after sometime, he approached the king again. (*Note: As per the terms of the contest he is not supposed to step into the country again.*) Knowing that the king who had lost his eyesight would be eager to get it back somehow, Sambanthandan said to the king: "O mighty king! There is only one way of getting back your eyesight. If the heavenly Paarijata-flowers are brought and placed over your eyes, they will regain vision. Please, therefore, request Arunagiri to fetch the flowers and in case he declines to do so, I shall at once bring them for you." The king, not knowing Sambanthandan's evil intentions but desirous of regaining his vision, requested Arunagiri accordingly, and the saint readily agreed. Arunagiri climbed the Temple-Gopuram (Tower), left his physical body there, entered the body of a

parrot that was just dead then, and flew to the heavenly region. Sambanthandan took this opportunity and informed the king that Arunagiri is dead, that his body lies in the Arunachala-Gopuram and that it should be burnt soon. The king, too, without due investigation or thought ordered it to be cremated, which the evil-minded got done without the least delay, lest Arunagiri should come back to life.

When the Arunagiri-parrot returned from heaven with the Paarijata-flowers, he found his body missing from the Gopuram. Taking it to be the Will of God, the parrot went to the king, offered the flowers to him and, to his great joy, restored his eye-sight. The king felt extremely sorry for his hasty and ill-considered action in getting Arunagiri's body burnt, wept bitterly and begged his pardon.

Here comes the interesting and intriguing matter. Was there a real necessity for Arunagiri to go to heaven to fetch the Parijata flower to restore the king's eye- sight? Or was it a mere story created with some ulterior motive? Certainly there was no necessity, because:

1. We have seen that the king did not lose his sight during the 'Event'. So there was no question of restoring his sight and all the rest of the story.

2. Even supposing that he had lost sight, it was not that it can be restored only by the heavenly Paarijata flower. Arunagiri had all the *Siddhis* or supernatural powers bestowed upon him by the Lord on Day One. He had the power to restore sight by a mere touch, or by applying *Vibhuti* (the holy ash) uttering the Lord's Name, which according to some, he did.

3. Even supposing that the sight can be restored only by the Paarijata flower, it was not necessary that he should go personally, because he could bring them by his *Siddhis*, or by a

prayer to the Lord who would have poured the flowers. To one who could manifest the Lord Himself in an open assembly by a mere prayer, to materialise a few Paarijata-flowers by his supernatural powers or by another prayer to the Lord should have been no difficult job.

4. Even supposing Arunagiri himself had to go to bring the flowers, there was no need for him to go as a parrot. For this, some say that he went as a parrot, because he cannot go to heaven with this *Panchabhuta-Sarira* or his human body composed of the five elements. But, this does not hold good as the parrot's body too is made of the same five elements as the human body, though in different proportions! We have the instance of Arjuna who went to Devaloka (heaven), learnt many *Astras* (divine weapons) from Indra and returned with those *Astras* which helped him in the Mahabharata war with the *Kauravas*. So, if necessary, Arunagiri could have gone with the human body; he had all the powers.

Also, we find the story of king Muchukundan in the *Tamil Kanda Puranam*. He was ruling in South India, with the town Karoor as his capital. He went to Indraloka with his army, at the invitation of Indra to help him fight against the demon Valan who was harassing him. He helped Indra kill the demon, got the Lord Somaskanda Murti from Indra and installed the Murti at Tiruvaaroor.

5. Again, simply to say, 'Arunagiri went as a parrot and brought the flowers' is easy, but is it practicable? Is it possible for a small bird **to fly** to heaven? Does the king who asked Arunagiri or the parrot or anyone know the distance to and direction of heaven from Tiruvannamalai? But to this objection they say that Arunagiri had supernatural powers or Siddhis and so it was possible. It is true, he had all the Siddhis; but then with them he could have restored the king's eye sight by other

means as well. It is also true that one can go to Devaloka only through Yogic-power or Sidhhi or supernatural power, because Bhuloka and Devaloka or other Lokas are in different realms, just as Rishi Narada who has Yogic-powers moves from one realm to another; but then it is instantaneous, it takes no time. And so, even if we presume that Arunagiri went to heaven as a parrot by his Yogic power, he could go and bring the flowers **instantaneously**, which will leave no time for Sambanthandan to do the concocted drama of reporting to the king that he is dead, getting his orders and get his body cremated. Of course, if Arunagiri is presumed to have gone in his body, then there is no question even for this drama.

6. Moreover, Arunagiri was asked to bring the Paarijata flowers. He was not asked to go as a parrot. Why should he enter the dead parrot's body? In support of this, some cite the example of Sankaracharya and Tirumoolar, which is totally **irrelevant**. Because, Sankaracharya could not go to the queen as Sankaracharya to learn about Kaama-sashtra; and the bereaved, lamenting cows could not be consoled by Tirumoolar as Tirumoolar but only as the cowherd, their master. So they had of necessity to enter other bodies. But there was no so such necessity for Arunagiri; he could go to heaven in his body itself.

7. Above all and most interestingly, the Paarijata plant and flowers were/are available all over India and in Tiruvannamalai itself! The divine plant Paarijata was brought to *Bhuloka* (this earth) by the Supreme Being, Bhagavan Sri Krishna Himself, to fulfil the specific wish of His wife Satyabhama, and He planted it in the garden of her palace in Dwaraka, more than 5000 years ago. (Chapter 59 of the 10th Skanda of the Srimad-Bhagavatam recounts this story in great

detail[7]*). Arunagiri was aware of this and also refers to this in his Tiruppugazh-889: '*Kanda Vaarkuzhal*' (sung at Thanjavur); in T-15: '*Varaith thadang kongkai*' sung at Tirup-parankundram; and in T-1279: '*Velai vaalaik kodiya*' (common songs). Since then the plant is available throughout India and it was available in Tiruvannamalai itself in the *Nandavana* (flower-garden) of the temple and the king's palace. So, even supposing that the flowers were required, there was no need for Arunagiri to go to heaven to fetch them.

Perhaps in his intuitive vision Arunagiri knew that misleading stories would be woven around him, each with one's ulterior motive; and so he seems to have given the reference to the story of the Paarijata in the above Tiruppugazh (T-889).

Of course, when Arunagiri's Tiruppugazh songs were not available in print in the early days (till the beginning of the twentieth century), we can understand the spreading of stories by hearsay. But, thanks to the yeoman services of Sri Pillai and his revered father, they are now available. They reveal many facts which nullify the hearsay or '*karna-paramparai*' stories. To hold on to those hearsay stories or to give a new twist to them even now, when the internal evidences from the available Tiruppugazhs clearly disclose the true story, is indeed pathetic. Even Sri Pillai who is fully aware of these Tiruppugazhs and the availability of the Paarijaata in Bhuloka believes that Arunagiri-parrot went to heaven to bring the Paarijaata flowers! How strange!!

Thus it becomes very, very clear that the whole story of the parrot is a myth; it was created or concocted and is perpetuated by devotees with vested interests and there was

[7] ** See Appendix 'A', at the end of this article (see page cxxvii).*

absolutely no need for Arunagiri to become a parrot. There are no authentic internal evidences for the king losing eyesight on having the Darshana of the Lord, or for the rest of the parrot-story, nor are they logical, practicable and intelligible.

Only Sri Pillai is clear that the king **did not lose** his sight by the Darshana of the Lord, during the 'Event'. But, strangely enough, he still believes that Arunagiri went as a parrot and brought the Paaraijaata flowers, though not for restoring king's eye sight, but for what purpose he alone knows! In his research work he says something like this: "After completing his long pilgrimage throughout India and return to Tiruvannamalai, Arunagiri was engaged in deep meditation. The evil mind of Sanbanthandan, who was defeated and put to shame earlier, conceived a plot against Arunagiri *(the poor man should have nurtured his grudge for about 10 or even more years!*). He persuaded Pravuda Deva Raya to ask Arunagiri to bring him the rare Paarijaata flower from Devaloka. (*Strangely enough Sri Pillai is silent on why the flower was required, as the king did not lose his eye-sight!*) (*Was the king so foolish as to ask the Saint, for whom he had such great respect, to fetch the flowers* ***for no purpose****, as though he was the king's servant!*) Anyhow, Arunagiri too without asking as to why the flowers are required, leaving his physical body in the Gopuram of the temple, entered the body of a dead parrot lying there and went as a parrot to Devaloka. Sambanthandan took this opportunity and informing the king that Arunagiri is dead got his body cremated. (*All this sounds more like grand-mother's story to little children for their entertainment, illogical and unreasonable!*) When Arunagiri-parrot returned with the flower the king realised and regretted his mistake (*there is no mention as to what was done with the flower!*) Taking it as the will of God, the parrot flew away to Tirutthani to rest on the arm of the Lord there." Why?

Arunagiri could have very well discarded the parrot's body and merged in the all-pervading Absolute or Lord Murugan, as his mission had already been fulfilled. We don't know in what way the Arunagiri-parrot perching on the Lord's arm enhances the glory of the Lord or Saint Arunagiri. Also, what happened to the parrot afterwards, God only knows! Some authors believe that Arunagiri-parrot is sitting on the Lord's arm even today!!

In support of Arunagiri becoming a parrot on the Lord's arm, Sri Pillai quotes the Tiruppugazh T-425: '*Sariyaiyaalarkkum*' sung in Kathirkaamam, and T-1151: '*Kadaici vandha*'. A free translation of T-425 would be: "O Lord enshrined in Kathirkaamam (in Sri Lanka)! Will I attain That State which is beyond the reach of people who practise the *sariyai* or the *kiriyai* or any of the great Yoga methods; which is even above the *Paraa-sakti* (Supreme Power) that is capable of bestowing real Wisdom which cannot even be approached by diverse religious pursuits; which is beyond even the *Turiya* or transcendental stage wherein Yogis remain in a state of Self-absorption (i.e., the *Turiyaatiita* state); --- Which is the incomparable Abode, wherein the unique, all-pervading Effulgence of Supreme *Jnana* or Wisdom shines; the eternal and supremely Perfect State of ***Saayujya*** (the non-dual state of *Oneness with the Lord*), ***which is the endless state of fame and supreme Bliss-Embodiment (Sukha-Svarupa)."*** This is the description, given in unmistakable terms, of the Indescribable State of *Sat-Chit-Ananda Para Brahman*. Only a Saint of the stature of Arunagiri can give such a marvellous description. In fact this is a description of the State in which he was, as a *Jivan-mukta* {(liberated while still in the body; his Karmas (both good and bad) having been destroyed when the Lord wrote the Mantra on his tongue with His Vel on Day One (T-725: *Mukilaa menum*)} and aspiring for the State beyond that,

which is *Videha-mukti* (liberation, freed from embodiment of any kind -- human or bird, etc.). The prayer of this Tiruppugazh is, therefore, for attaining that highest State of *Videha-mukti* when he sheds his body, which is *Sat-Chit-Ananda* Para Brahman. Though the word 'Sukha-Svarupa' can be interpreted to mean the 'parrot-form', it would not be correct to do so in the context of this song, as one cannot equate the 'parrot-form' with the state of *Saayujya* (*Videha-mukti* or Para Brahman) which is beyond all names, forms and conditions, as aptly described in the song itself by Arunagiri. In my opinion, it would not be wisdom on anyone's part to presume that Arunagiri is praying for the parrot's form or that the Lord would understand/interpret his prayer as such and grant him a parrot's form. After all, the parrot is a physical object, perishable and belonging to this relative world; neither can it be equated nor go together with that sublime State of *Turiyaatiita* or *Saayujya, Sukha-Svarupa* or Bliss-Embodiment, as Sri Pillai tries to suggest.

Saayujya is the state of Absolute Oneness with the Lord. It is the fourth and final state of liberation (Mukti), wherein the devotee totally merges into the Lord --- the first three being Saalokya[8]*, Saamipya and Saarupya, --- and the parrot's form cannot be equated with Saayujya. Even if the parrot perches on the arm of the Lord *forever*, it cannot be called the state of Saayujya. It can at best be Saamepya, not even Saaroopya; what to say of Saayujya?

As regards the other Tiruppugazh T-1151 '*Kadaici vandha*', a free translation would be: "The delusion and the

[8]**In Saalokya Mukti, the devotee lives in the realm of the Lord (Vaikuntha, Kailasa, etc.). In Saameepya Mukti, the devotee lives close to the Lord. In Saaroopya Mukti, the devotee has/attains the very form of the Lord.*

climax of sex-pleasure having subsided; thereafter, will I be able to *experience* You, attaining that (*Sukha-Padam*) State of Supreme Bliss, freely roaming/enjoying in that (*Mavuna Panjaram*) domain of stupendous Silence, remaining immersed in the ecstasy of Your grace? Shall I be fortunate to attain that Happiness one of these days, O Lord!" This song also refers to the same state as that of the song mentioned above (T-425), though in different words. The state of *Silence* is the state of *Turiyaatiita* which is also the '*Sukha-Svarupa*' and '*Sukha-Padam*' -- all which mean the Absolute or Para Brahman.

In Tiruppugazh T-1110 '*Karavuser magalir*' Arunagiri prays for granting a similar state, thus: "O Lord! In order that I may get freed from all these enjoyments (with the prostitutes), kindly grant me that Bliss which ensues when the mind gets absorbed in the (*Mavuna panjaram*) Abode of Absolute Silence (which is Para Brahman)." '*Mavuna Panjaram*' is used in both the songs T-1151 and T-1110.

The word '*Panjaram*' has many meanings: place/abode/domain, body, vulture, cage, etc. A word's meaning is to be used according to the context, not any meaning anywhere. That would not be wisdom though it can be done. Thus when referring to God or the state of Liberation, which is the state of Unlimited Freedom of every kind, to use the meaning of 'cage' in the context of the above Tiruppugazhs would be unwise. 'Cage' implies limitation, confinement; 'place/abode/domain' imply unlimited, unconditioned and vastness, which is God. God is Freedom from all limitations. In '*Kandar Anubhuti*' verse 15, the Lord is addressed as '*En-guna Panjaran*', i.e., the Abode (not cage) of the eight Virtues.

Again, in *Kandar Alankaram* verse 19, Arunagiri describes his state, as: "O Lord! Established in (*Mouna*) Supreme Silence,

experiencing You deeply, attaining a state of quiescence wherein the three *Gunas* are transcended, I remained forgetful of my individuality (the notion of 'I') and lo! the body remained as a log of wood!"

We can quote many more songs and verses of Arunagiri of a similar nature. All these clearly reveal the state in which Arunagiri was already established. And so it would be unwise on anyone's part to think that he would ask or pray for the state of a parrot. To think so would be like a king praying for the position of a beggar. We have also seen that neither was there a need for him to become a parrot nor did he ever become a parrot.

Incidentally, it may be pointed out that these songs also reveal Arunagiri's state of Advaitic Realisation and his concept of God; the Murugan that is addressed in all his Tiruppugazh songs is not the cult-God, though addressed as 'Murugan', etc., but the Absolute that is beyond all cults. That is why most of the Tiruppugazhs end with 'Perumale' (பெருமாளே), which means 'The Great One' or 'The Supreme Being'. "Perumal' may be regarded as the Tamil equivalent of the Sanskrit word '*Brahman*', the Absolute.

Surely, the Omniscient Lord knows the intention of the saint in that prayer of T-425 that it is for the highest state of* Saayujya *and would interpret* Sukha-Svarupa *as the state of* 'Bliss-embodiment' *which is* Saayujya *and* not *as the parrot-form. To say that the Lord granted Arunagiri 'Sukha-Svarupa' or the form of a parrot which would fulfil both the meanings, i.e., 'form of a parrot' and 'Eternal Bliss', would be a *totally meaningless misinterpretation and imagination*, just to suit one's purpose. The two cannot go together as already explained.

Above all, this prayer of the Tiruppugazh is only for the final attainment, not for going to heaven to fetch Paarijata; nor did the Lord grant Arunagiri the body of a parrot in fulfilment of this prayer, it was the outcome of Sambanthandan's evil design. Even the king did not ask Arunagiri *to go as a parrot* but only wanted him to get the flowers, which he could have done without going to heaven. It is only authors who believe in the traditional/hearsay stories, as well as Sri Pillai, who say that Arunagiri entered the dead body of a parrot and went to Devaloka. *There is no internal evidence for any of these*. They are only stories foisted upon Arunagiri for achieving their own ends, but made to appear as though the Lord granted it. Even though there are no internal evidences, yet Sri Pillai, who bases his research work on internal evidences, accepts only such ideas from the Traditional or 'karna-paramparai' account that suit his purpose. Strange indeed! One, therefore, wonders why does he want to accept these stories? Perhaps, only to support his interpretation of 'Sukha-Svarupa' as the 'parrot-form'. But, why he and other authors are so keen on the parrot-form of Arunagiri? Maybe because they think: "There is a parrot on Devi Meenakshi's arm; why not we have one on 'our' Lord's arm also."

Sri Pillay further says that on return from heaven, not having found his body, the Arunagiri-parrot, after restoring eye-sight to the king, remained on the arm of Unnamulai Devi at Tiruvannamalai and sang the 'Devendra Sanga Vaguppu', then flew and settled on the arm of Lord Murugan at Tirutthani and sang the 'Seer-Paada Vaguppu', 'Vel Vaguppu', etc. The '*Tiru Vaguppus*' are 25. There is no reference to sex in any of them, and also no reference to fear of death (except in a few). Hence, Sri Pillai feels that the '*Tiru Vaguppus'* might have been given after Arunagiri became a parrot! But, everyone knows that birds

and animals also have all the instinctive needs and urges which the human beings have, viz., hunger, thirst, sleep, answering calls of nature, sex and fear of death. Moreover in the 100 verses of the *Kandar Anthaathi* also, there is no reference to sex in any of them, and no reference to fear of death except in a few verses. Can we, therefore, say that the *Kandar Anthaathi* was also given after Arunagiri became a parrot! *Kandar Anthaathi* is the outcome of a literary contest with Villiputturaar, while the *Tiru Vaguppus* are an outcome of Arunagiri's Tapas or penance at Tirutthani (see page cx), -- both have nothing to do with the parrot.

According to some, after restoring sight to the king the Arunagiri-parrot was leaving for Skanda-Loka, when Lord Murugan in the Tiruvannamalai temple called and asked him to stay on His arms and the parrot is there since then.

According to the Traditional account of Sri Thandapani Swamigal, from Tiruvannamalai the Arunagiri-parrot flew away to *Kanda-maadana Parvata* (the Abode of Lord Skanda, close to *Kailasa Parvata*, the Abode of Lord Siva) and Lord Skanda received it and made him rest on His right shoulder.

All the other authors who believe in the parrot story (except Sri Pillai) say that the 'Kandar Anubhuti' was given by Arunagiri as a parrot. According to some, after restoring eye sight to the king, the parrot perched on a peepul tree near Thiruvannamalai, wrote each verse of the 'Kandar Anubhuti' on one leaf with its beak and dropped it. The collection of these scattered leaves is the 'Kandar Anubhuti'. Hence there is no logical sequence in the verses of the work and it even needs re-arrangement! (*If the parrot could write the verses, can it not write the numbers of the verses also !!*) Others, who are totally devoted to Lord Murugan of Tirutthani, hold that the parrot

flew away from Thiruvannamalai to Tirutthani and perched on the arm of that Lord there and gave the 'Kandar Anubhuti'. Again, those who are devotees of the Murugan at Tiruchchengodu feel the parrot is perching on the arm of that Lord there. In how many places can one parrot be? There seems to be no end to the variations of the parrot-myth. But the fact is that Arunagiri never became a parrot, and when he shed his body, the Lord had granted him *Sayujya Mukti* as prayed for by him, and he had attained *Oneness with the Lord* more than 500 years ago, -- long, long before these stories (the Traditional and other hearsay ones) were invented by devotees who came later and make him languish as a parrot at different places! What a pity!!

Glory to Lord Skanda! Glory to Saint Arunagirinathar!! Glory to His Devotees!!!

Indeed the whole story, with all its variations, is a conjured up one, as there is a **Samadhi-Shrine/Altar dedicated to Arunagirinathar** (with an image of his carved in stone) in the western part of the Arunachaleshwarar's temple in Tiruvannamalai, where his body was interred when he shed it and attained Liberation.

It is most surprising and totally un-understandable that the authors who have written on the life of the Saint never make a reference to this Samadhi. They conveniently avoid this vital matter. Why? Perhaps it is uncomfortable to them, as it goes against their parrot-story. This is a fairly big structure near the west gate connecting the third and fourth *prakarams* (enclosures). It cannot be missed by any one; it strikes one's eyes as it is the only shrine there in the open space. Only Sri Pillai refers to it in his Vol.-III of 'Murugavel Panniru Thirumurai' published in 1952-53, in page 160, where he writes

about Tiruvannamalai: "கோயிலில் மேலைப் பிராகாரத்தில் இவர் (அருணகிரி) ***அடக்கமான இடத்தில்*** இவருடைய உருவம் ஒன்று சிறிதாகச் செய்து வைக்கப் பட் டிருக்கின்றது." But, in his research work on the life of the Saint, he too avoids mentioning about it, because he also believes in the parrot story! What a contradiction!!

அருணகிரிநாதர் அடக்கமான இடம்

Picture (1): The Holy Samadhi-Altar of Saint Arunagirinathar, where his body is interred, with a little shrine for him in the front. {see picture (2)}

Picture (2): Close-up view of the little shrine of the Saint in picture (1).

Picture (3): The Image of Saint Arunagirinathar inside his little shrine, in picture (2), to which daily worship is performed.

Now, let us imagine for a moment that the parrot episode is true. What would be its consequence? It would mean that finally Sambanthandan succeeded in eliminating Arunagiri by his evil design, which will not be so much of a defeat for

Arunagiri but of the Lord Himself. The Lord, who saved Arunagiri from Sambanthandan's earlier evil intention by appearing in that huge assembly, could not now save His devotee but allowed him to be defeated and cremated. Would it not mean that the untruthful Sanbanthandan has succeeded and the Lord or Truth has failed! But the Vedas declare '*Satyameva Jayate, naanritam*' -- 'Truth alone triumphs, not untruth.' And in the Bhagavad-Gita, Lord Krishna says, '*Na me bhaktah pranashyati*' -- 'My devotee perishes not.' Let the true devotees of Lord Murugan touch their hearts and feel whether the parrot episode could be true! Of course, we have seen that the episode is untenable for various reasons!!

Now, when different devotees have said different things about the parrot-story, let me also say something of my own! **If** it were **really true** that Arunagiri went to Devaloka as a parrot, brought the Parijata flowers and restored eye-sight to the king, he would/could as well have also cured thousands of blind people. Because, is he not '*Karunaikku Arunagiri*', -- 'Arunagiri, an embodiment of compassion'? Why should he do it only for the king? He is a saint, interested in the welfare of all. He has opened the spiritual or wisdom eyes of the masses with his Tiruppugazh and other works. So it would be most appropriate that he opened an 'Arunagiri Netralayam', help blind people gain eye sight so that they could study his works and realise God.

Also, the saints/Yogis of the last over 500 years (since Arunagiri's time) could have brought the flower and help remove the blindness of millions who are suffering! It would be real service to God. "*Maanava seva Maadhava seva*" -- "Service of mankind is service of God." And, if they are interested, they can mint money even by charging a very small

amount! But, all this with an 'IF', and the '**IF'** is a very, very big IF; impossible and impracticable, except for the imaginations of those authors!

In order to obviate the problem of the king alone losing eye-sight in that large assembly and the impossibility of fetching the Paarijata from heaven, some of the recent authors have found a new legend. According to it the king was suffering from a chronic eye problem (not blindness). Sambanthandan told the king that if the juice of the Paarijaata flowers, which is available in the upper reaches of the Himalayas unapproachable to humans, were to be applied, the eye disease would be cured. (*The regions in the Himalayas unapproachable to the humans are only the eternal snow peaks where no plants can grow!*) The rest of the story is more or less the same. In a way this story makes it easy for opening 'Arunagiri Netralayam**'** for eye problems, as it is easier to get the flower from the Himalayas than from heaven, if only the plant grows in the snow peaks!

(My sincere suggestion: Pharmaceutical Companies would do well to undertake research and experiments on the Paarijaata plant, -- its root, bark, twigs, leaves, flowers and seeds, if not already done. It is quite possible they may find some rare remedy for some diseases, as it is a divine plant and brought to this earth by Lord Sri Krishna Himself.)

STHALA-YATRA

(Pilgrimage to places of Lord Murugan)

Now let us proceed further. After the above 'Event', Arunagiri who was saved by the Lord and commanded to sing His glories, undertook a pilgrimage to pay his homage to Lord

Murugan enshrined in almost every town, village and even out-of-the-way places, and wherever he went he paid his tribute to the Lord of that place by dedicating one or more Tiruppugazh songs in honour of that Lord by referring to the name of the place in that particular song. Thus we gather from the available songs that he visited more than 200 places of Lord Skanda, big and small, scattered all over India, including Ceylon and upto Mount Kailasa. Some of these places are:

Chidambaram, Vaitheswaran Koil, Mayuram, Sikkal, Ettikudi, Vedaranyam, Tiruvaavaduthurai, Tiruppanandal, Kumbakonam, Swami Malai, Tanjavur, Salem, Tiruchchengodu, Tiruchirappalli, Vayaloor, Virali Malai, Palani, Madurai, Tirupparankundram, Pazhamudirsolai, Tirunelveli, Tiruchchendur, Valliyoor, Tirukkonam, Kadirkamam (in Sri Lanka), Paapa Nasam, Sivakasi, Rameswaram (all these places are south of Tiruvannamalai); Tirupporur, Kanchipuram, Chennai, Valli Malai, Tiruttani, Tiruppati, Kalahasti, Varanasi, Hardwar (Mayapuri), Mount Kailasa (in the Himalayas), Jagannath (Puri), Vishakapatnam, and back to Tiruvannamalai (these places are north of Tiruvannamalai).

All the available 1300 and odd Tiruppugazh songs were given in these and other places, wherein Arunagiri pours out his experiences -- what he had with the prostitute women before and how he was saved, and the special favours which the Lord conferred on him at different places during his pilgrimage. He has dedicated the maximum number of songs to *Pazhani* (96 songs), next to it to *Tiruchchendur* (83 songs), and 78 songs to *Tiruvannamalai*, the town in which he was saved by the Lord from the net of the courtesans and was commanded to sing His glories (*Tiruppugazh*). We will confine ourselves here to a brief

account of the exceptional spiritual experiences Arunagiri had at some of the places. Though there is no way of knowing which route he actually took, it is believed that from Tiruvannamalai Arunagiri first went southwards, as most of the temples dedicated to Lord Murugan are in the South. At the town *Thiruvennei Nallur* Arunagiri had Darshan (Vision) of the Lord dancing, mounted on the wonderful peacock, happily! The next important place he visited was *Chidambaram*, the town famous for the Cosmic Dancer, Lord Nataraja. Here he was blessed by Lord Nataraja and Lord Murugan appearing as one and the same God. At *Tiruvetkalam* the Lord gave Arunagiri vision of His majestic Feet and Grace-filled eye-glance-initiation which ensured his salvation. From there he went to *Seekaazhi*, the birthplace of the great Saint Tiru-Jnaana-Sambandar and glorified him in many Tiruppugazh songs. Then, while at the place called *Tiru-Mannip-padikkarai*, it is said that the Lord Murugan enshrined at *Melai Vayaloor* (also called *Seippathi*) appeared in Arunagiri's dream and commanded him to come there where He would grant him the blessing of **daily** singing His Tiruppugazh songs. Since then Arunagiri was longing to reach 'Melai Vayaloor' as soon as possible. On his way, at the place called *Etti-kudi* he expressed his wish to the Lord to etch His emblems (of the Vel and Peacock) on him, even as saint Tiru-Naavuk-karasu had prayed to Lord Siva to etch His emblem of the '*Trisoola*' (Trident) and the '*Rishabha*' (holy Bull) on him. (See page-cvii for its fulfilment). From there he visited *Swami Malai* where he had 'Paada–Darisanam' (Vision of the Lord's Feet) and sang the 'Tiru-ezhu-Koorrttrirukkai' (a special type of poem called 'Chittra-kavi' which can be portrayed in a drawing). Then he reached '*Thanjavoor*'. Glorifying the Lord there, Arunagiri mentions about Lord Krishna bringing the divine plant

'Paarijaata' from Devaloka or heaven to this earth, (T-889: '*Kanda vaarkuzhal'*) after defeating Indra and the host of gods who fought and tried to prevent Him. From there he reached *Tiruch-chengodu.* He was so much enchanted by the beauty of the place and the Lord enshrined therein that he glorified Him in many songs not only in Tiruppugazh but also in *Kandar Alankaram* and *Kandar Anubhuti*. It is said that he also got a boon from that Lord that wherever he be, if he calls 'Kanda' the Lord would appear and help him, even as the Lord had appeared earlier at Tiruvannamalai in the midst of a huge assembly of devotees (in that 'Event'). Though unwilling to depart from there, desirous of visiting *Melai Vayaloor* soon, he reached *Tiruchiraapalli* where also he praised the Lord, remembering how He appeared on His peacock-vehicle and gave His Vision to that vast assembly of devotees at Tiruvannmalai. While staying at Tiruchiraapalli, the saint seems to have visited *Melai Vayaloor* which is close by, before he actually went there later to stay for many days.

At *Melai Vayaloor*, Arunagiri had many divine experiences. With the permission of Lord Murugan there, Arunagiri sought the blessings of Lord Ganesa there (called *Poyyaa-Ganapathy*) to sing more Tiruppugazh songs on Lord Murugan, His Peacock and Vel, etc. And that Lord Ganesa appeared in his dream and blessed him accordingly. Similarly, Lord Siva of that temple (called *Agniiswarar*), to whom also he offered prayers, appeared in Arunagiri's dream and granted him the needed energy to sing Tiruppugazhs. Accordingly, Arunagiri sang many Tiruppugazhs (about 18) extolling Lord Murugan of that place. Pleased with his songs, one day, the Lord appeared in his dream and said: "I have granted you the power to sing my glories in the *Madhura Kavi* and *Chitra Kavi* type of verses. Sing them **daily**. I reside at *Viraali Malai*. Come

to that place. Destroying your ignorance, I have filled you with the Nectar of Wisdom." So saying, the Lord disappeared. On waking up from that dream, Arunagiri expressed his gratitude to the Lord for all the blessings. And taking leave of Him, the saint left for *Viraali Malai*. Here too he stayed for some days and sang the glory of the Lord enshrined there in diverse ways in 15 Songs. Then he proceeded to *Jnaana Malai* and prayed to the Lord there to once again grant him those Feet which He had granted on Day One at Tiruvannamalai when he jumped from the temple tower, deciding to cast off his body and soul. From there while he was on his way to *Peroor* he lost his way in the midst of a thick jungle. Bewildered, he prayed to the Lord at *Tiruchchengodu*, Who had given him an assurance that He would appear to help Arunagiri wherever and whenever he 'calls' "Kanda". And the Lord at once appeared there as a guide and took the saint out of the forest safely. Arunagiri then reached *Pazhani*, the famous abode of Murugan. The very sight of the hill-top temple from a distance threw Arunagiri into a trance and made him feel sorry for not having visited this marvellously charming place earlier. As already mentioned, the saint has devoted the maximum number of songs to this place (96 songs). In these songs he deals with various subjects some of which are: his wish to devote his life to the research on literature pertaining to Murugan; saint Tiru-Jnaana Sambandhar's *Thevaaram* songs are superior to the famous work of Tiruvalluvar called *Tirukkural*; prayed for the grant of the Lord's Feet once again; that he had attained many *Siddhis* in Yoga, etc., etc. While staying at *Pazhani*, Arunagiri happened to meet a very great devotee of Lord Murugan of that place, known as 'Kalisai Sevagan' whose devotion to the Lord was so intense that Arunagiri praises him saying that Lord Murugan is proud and pleased to reside in his heart. After staying there for

many days, Arunagiri reached *Tanicchayam*. It is here that the Lord ordered him to sing His praises in *Chandam* metre, which conferred on him easy proficiency and he became the preceptor to others to sing in the *Chandam* metre. He then wended his way to the famous temple-town of *Madurai*. At Madurai he prayed to Lord Murugan enshrined in the famous temple of Mother Meenakshi to grant him his wish to sing the glory and power of His Feet. While staying at Madurai, he also visited the two nearby important temples of Lord Murugan known as *Tirupparan-kundram* and *Pazha-Mudir-Cholai* and sang many songs in praise of the deities there. Visiting some temples on the way, he reached the famous and beautiful sea-shore temple town of *Tiruchchendoor*. Captivated by the enchanting charm of the town, the temple and the importance of that holy place he dedicated 83 songs (second largest number) glorifying the Lord there in diverse ways, to his heart's content. Highly pleased with Arunagiri's songs, the Lord gave him Darshana (Vision) as a little child, lovingly dancing with different ornaments on both ankles, bringing delight to the saint's heart.

It is said that while Arunagiri was at *Tiruchchndoor* he met a great poet and scholar, Sri Villiputturar.

The Villiputturar Episode

It is rare that name and fame go un-encountered by jealousy and hatred. It is said that the great literary scholar and poet, Sri Villiputturar, the author of the '*Mahabharata*' in Tamil-verses and a staunch Vaishnavite, went about the Tamil country, inviting poets and men of learning for a literary contest, defeated them by his vast erudition, and, as a punishment, cut off their ears. He was an embodiment of vanity and haughtiness. Probably God, the Almighty, wanted to teach him a lesson. The great fame of Saint Arunagiri could not be

tolerated by him. It is said that when Arunagiri was at *Tirucchendur* during his pilgrimage, Villiputturar invited him for a literary contest. Though the Saint was not eager for such a contest, -- he being a devotee of God and a personification of humility, -- he accepted it, taking it as the will of God. Arunagiri answered all the questions put by Villiputturar, and now his turn came. Arunagiri composed a series of poems, which work is called *Kandar Anthaadi*, and Villiputturar annotated and expounded the meaning of the verses at once. But when it came to the 54th verse, in spite of his best efforts, he could neither decipher the poem nor make out anything whatsoever of it. Indeed this was most strange! He accepted his defeat at the hands of Arunagiri who wrote the meaning of the poem, which is even today the only available commentary on that particular verse. And, as per the terms of the contest, Villiputturar's ears were to be cut off, for which he offered himself. But Arunagiri would not indulge in any act of cruelty. He let the scholar go un-humiliated but took a word from him that he shall never repeat his inhuman act any more. This act of compassion earned for Arunagiri the title "*Karunaikku Arunagiri*" meaning "Arunagiri, for compassion". According to some this contest took place at *Tiruchchendur* as there is reference to this place in 26 songs of the '*Kandar Anthaati*' of 100 verses. But according to some others, it happened at *Tiruvannamalai* as Arunagiri invokes Lord Ganesha of that place in the Kaappu verse of the work.

Sthala-Yatra (Continued)

After Tiruchchendur, Arunagiri visited *Valli-uoor* and then decided to go to *Eezham* (Ceylon, now Sri Lanka) crossing the sea. At Sri Lanka he visited *Arukkonamalai* and *Kandy*. He then went to the famous *Kadirkaamam*, which is regarded as a

powerful place. Hence he stayed there for some days and devoted 13 songs in glorification of the Lord there. He then returned to India.

On return to India, Arunagiri went to *Pothiya Malai*, where the great sage Agastya stayed and did penance, and prayed to the Lord there (T-413 --- *Vediththa Vaarkuzhal*): 'O Lord! Be pleased to (i) draw me close to You and bless me to join the elite group of great *Tapasvins*; (ii) please also *etch the seal of the spear (Vel) and the peacock on my body*,' for etching which he had earlier also prayed at *Ettikudi*. (We will see the fulfilment of prayers (i) at *Tirutthani* and (ii) at *Tirut-thurutthi*.) Then visiting many temples dedicated to Lord Murugan, Arunagiri arrived at *Raameshwaram* and *Dhanuk-kodi* where, in his songs, he recounts the valorous deeds of Lord Rama. Then he came to *Piraan-malai*. Here also the Lord showed His dancing vision to Arunagiri. He then reached, visiting and singing His glories in many places on the way, *Tirut-thurutthi* (also known as *Kutrraalam*) where he seems to have had an un-usual and most astounding dream-vision. In (T-850) '*Malaik kanaththu ena maarpinil*' song of this place, Arunagiri says: "Just as one who has been given refuge is protected and taken care of, You affectionately invited this worthless person and graced me by **embossing the seal of *the Vel and the Peacock*** (etched on both shoulders, as a protective shield for me) and commanded me: 'Sing My Mukti-conferring (*Kandar*) *Anubhuti*, (which is) full of My (**Arul**) Grace and (**Tirup-Pugazh**) Divine Glory'."

On waking up, Arunagiri was astonished and over-joyed to see the emblems of VEL and MAYIL (Peacock) etched on his shoulders. He silently thanked the Lord for fulfilling his prayers made at *Ettikudi* (see page-cii) and at *Pothiya Malai*

(see above). Most probably he composed the Moksha-conferring Mantra-Sastra '*Kandar Anubhuti*' at Tirut-thuruthi. Since the Lord commanded him to sing the '*Kandar Anubhuti'* etching the emblems of the Vel and the Mayil (Peacock), the inspiration must have been so over-whelming that Arunagiri sang the '*Kandar Anubhuti'* **then and there**, ***commencing the first verse with* 'Aadum Pari Vel ……' meaning 'The dancing Peacock and the Vel ….';** and also referring to and/or invoking **the Vel** in 25 verses and **the Peacock** in 8 verses, in that work of 51 verses.

Perhaps, when Thayumanavar says: "*Kandar Anubhuti petrru ……*" he means that Arunagiri gave the '*Kandar Anubhuti*' after getting the emblems etched by the Lord, by which Arunagiri has been accepted into His Divine fold. Granting the emblems may also be regarded as *Shakti-paata* by which the Lord transmitted His special powers to the Saint for the purpose of singing the *Kandar Anubhuti*, as commanded by Him.

After Thiru-thuruthi Arunagiri returned to Tiruvanna-malai, the place where his life was transformed by the extra-ordinary grace of the Lord.

After staying at Tiruvannamalai for some time, Arunagiri continued his pilgrimage in the northern direction, visiting many, many towns and singing the glory of the Lord enshrined in those places. At a place called *Putthoor*, he happened to meet one great devotee, known as "Soma Naathan", who had a Mutt (*Madam*) of his own, where he worshipped Lord Murugan regularly. From there he reached the famous and very sacred place of *Kaanchipuram*. Staying here for some time he sang 44 Tiruppugazhs. As Kaanchipuram is sanctified by the Divine Mother *Kaamaakshi*, Arunagiri particularly sang Her glories

and the penance She did on the banks of the river 'Kambai' to attain Lord Siva. Proceeding from there, Arunagiri went to *Tiruvaanmiyur*, *Tiruvotriyur* and *Mayilapur* (all in Madras, now Chennai) and then arrived at **Valli Malai** visiting many places on the way. Being the most sacred place, as Valli Devi lived there, Arunagiri went round that hill with devotion and joy. It is to this place that Lord Murugan came all the way from Tirutthani on foot, did many pranks with Valli, teased and tested her and finally made her His Divine Consort, because of her absolute purity and dedicated devotion to Him, thereby revealing the secret (which is called '*Valli San-Maargam*' – meaning 'Valli's sacred-Path') that "whoever renounces his ego, consisting of 'I' and 'mine', and worships Me, I become easy of attainment to him and I become his servant." Devoting 11 Tiruppugazhs to *Valli Malai*, describing the different Lilas of the Lord with Valli Devi, Arunagiri left for **Tirutthani** from where the Lord came to Valli Malai in search of Valli Devi. At Tirutthani he was overwhelmed by the beauty of the hillock; and when he went up to the temple on the hill-top and beheld the glorious Lord, he was emotionally so over-powered that he regretted for not having come there earlier to pay his homage to Him. He poured out his heart's devotion in 64 Tiruppugazh songs to that Lord and praised and glorified Him in diverse ways. Some of these are regarded as protection against and/or specific cure for all diseases, some a great protection from evils and enemies, some bring success in one's undertakings, etc. etc. Here the Lord eternally dances flanked on both sides by His divine consorts Valli and Deivayaanai. And the Lord gave the gracious gift of Vision of those dancing Feet to Arunagiri, which he says: 'can never be forgotten in my waking and even in my dreams!' Arunagiri regards *Tirutthani* as one of the few special places where he received many favours and blessings

from the Lord. He was so much inspired at *Tirutthani* that he prayed to the Lord there (T-262, '*Karikkuzhal viriththum'*): "In order that Your heart may be delighted, I wish to bathe in the sea of penance, become Your devout-servant here, residing (for sometime) at Your abode (*Thiruththanigai*); --- kindly bless me with this good fortune!" Most probably, in fulfilment of this prayer, the Lord made Arunagiri to visit *Tirutthani* again on completion of his north Indian tour, stay there for quite a long time, bathe in the sea of severe penance and bring out the pearls of the *Tiru Vaguppu*, to the delight of His heart.

From Tirutthani, the Saint proceeded to *Tiru Vengadam* (also known as *Tiruppati*) where he says, in his Tiruppugazh, there was also a temple of Lord Murugan. He then went to *Tiruk-Kaalaththi* (Kaalahasti), praising it as the South-Kailasa. Then he went to *Sri Sailam*. From Sri Sailam, Arunagiri went northwards, undertaking the arduous *Kailasa Yatra*, traversing over unknown regions, crossing forests, mountains and rivers. He first reached *Kaasi* (Benares), and then *Maayaapuri* (Haridwar) and finally he had the great satisfaction of having Darshana of the most sacred *Kailaasa Parvat* (*Tiruk-Kayilai*), offering 6 Tiruppugazhs in glorification of the sacred Abode of Lord Siva. He then wended his way back southwards, visiting *Jagannaatha (Puri)* and *Visuvai* (Vizag or Visakha-pattinam), to return to Tiruvannamalai.

Tapasya at Tirutthani and giving 'Tiru Vaguppus'

On his way back to Tiruvannamalai, when Arunagiri was near **Tirutthani**, the Lord pulled him there, to fulfil his two prayers -- (i) at *Pothiya Malai* Arunagiri had prayed to enlist him in the elite group of great Tapasvins like Agastya (see p-cvii), and (ii) earlier at Tirutthani he had prayed to stay there and bathe in the sea of Tapas or penance, to bring delight to the

Lord's heart. Accordingly, Arunagiri lived in *Tirutthani* for a very long time (may be a few years) immersed in intense *Tapasya* or severe penance with meditation for long periods, occasionally coming out and giving one *Tiru Vaguppu*. The Tiruppugazh and other works of Arunagiri were the outcome of the Lord's command to sing His glories, mainly intended to help the masses to attain God by freeing themselves from the attraction for sex. On the other hand, the *Tiru Vaguppus* were an outcome of Arunagiri's Tapas, meant to bring delight to the Lord (உனது சித்தம் களிகூர), as prayed for and granted. Hence those poems are of an exalted type and so we do not find at all any reference or prayer for freedom from attraction for sex, and also fear of death except in a few of them. As he sang them living in Tirutthani, there is reference to that place in many of the *Vaguppus*. Since there are 25 sections (or *Vaguppus*) in the *Tiru Vaguppu*, it is very likely that he lived in Tirutthani doing *Tapas* or austerity for some years, till he completed them. Thus the prayer made at *Pothiya Malai* to enlist him in the elite group of *Tapasvins* like Agastya and the prayer made at Tirutthani earlier to stay there and do intense *Tapasya* were both fulfilled by the Lord. Thus with the fulfilment of his prayer and the completion of *Tiru Vaguppu*, the last of his works, Arunagiri's mission was coming to an end.

On Day One, when Arunagiri fell from the temple tower and the Lord saved him, He **commissioned** him with the mission of singing His praises and thereby serving mankind. At once he was cured of his diseases. His Karmas (both good and bad) were destroyed when the Lord wrote the Mantra on his tongue with His Vel (T-725: *Mukilaa menum*) and he shone with Divine Wisdom; he became a *Jivanmukta*, liberated while still living in this body, (i.e., was freed from the body-prison, no more conditioned or limited by it). To this freedom from the

body-prison which he had attained on Day One, Arunagiri refers in line 12 of *Velaik Kaaran Vaguppu*. By giving out thousands of Tiruppugazh and other works he was getting more and more saturated with God-Consciousness, soaked in the Bliss of God (*Sukha-Svarupa*). And now by the intense *Tapas* and meditation at Thirutthani, Arunagiri was getting more and more immersed in God-Consciousness and freed from body-consciousness, from the body-prison, so much so that he became physically emaciated (which can be seen truly represented in his image, in picture 3 on page-xcviii).

By the time he gave the twelfth *Vaguppu* called the *Vedicchi Kaavalan Vaguppu*, because of his intense Tapas, he had undergone much transformation in his spiritual Awareness (highly enlightened). It is usual for great Saints and Yogis who are in such a high state of God-Consciousness that they refer to themselves in the third person. Thus, in line 6 of the *Vedicchi Kaavalan Vaguppu* Arunagiri says: "O Lord! O embodiment of grace! Singing and praising You in these glorious *Vaguppus* in a classified form (in 25 *Vaguppus* or groups or sections) (here at Tirutthani), is a devotee and resident of Thiruvannamalai who offered the glowing 'Thiruppugazhs' which You accepted and wear as a dazzling pendant." We find such references to themselves in the third person by other saints like Tiru-Jnanasambandar (1.1.11), Sundarar (Kodumudi Pathigam: 7.48.10), Aandaal (Naachiar Tirumozhi: Sinthoorach Sempodi – 10) and others. Even North Indian saints like Meera, Kabir, Thukaaraam and others have done so. Arunagiri referring to himself in the third person, therefore, does not mean or imply that the *Tiru Vaguppus* were given by him, not as the person-Arunagiri but as the parrot-Arunagiri, as Sri Pillai tries to make out, which is far from truth. It is not necessary that Arunagiri should have become a parrot to refer to himself as a third

person. And also Arunagiri never became a parrot, as we have seen earlier. Also, because Arunagiri was staying at Tirutthanai when he gave that *Vaguppu*, he refers to himself as the resident of Tiruvannamalai. In fact it is implied in that statement that after completing his Tapas at Tirutthani, Arunagiri will return to Tiruvannamalai which is his place of residence.

Also, in my opinion, உரைபெற வகுத்து in line 6 of the *Vedicchi Kaavalan Vaguppu* – "Singing and praising You in these glorious *Vaguppus* in a classified form (in 25 *Vaguppus* or groups or sections)" seems to imply that all the *Tiru Vaguppus* were given at one time and for one purpose (i.e., at Tirutthani and while engaged in severe penance, to bring delight to the Lord) and not at different times and for different purposes (i.e., not some now at Tirutthani and some earlier at Tiruvannamalai at the time of the supposed contest with Sambanthandan, either to prevent the Devi appearing or to help Murugan get freed from the hold of the Devi, etc.)

Thus, with this prolonged stay at Tirutthani and giving the '*Tiru Vaguppus*', Arunagiri's mission was coming to the end or fulfilment. He, therefore, decided to return to **Tiruvannamalai** from where his pilgrimage and mission had commenced. When he came to Tiruvannamalai, concluding his pilgrimage, King Pravuda Deva accorded a royal reception to Arunagiri and honoured him suitably in his court. For the rest of his life Arunagiri lived in Tiruvannamalai, spending his time in devotion and meditation, ever absorbed in the bliss of God, as a liberated soul or *Jivanmukta Purusha*. When he attained Maha-Samadhi (or shed his body), a Samadhi was built for him in the western part of the temple in Thiruvannamalai where his body was interred; this was perhaps got done by the king in gratitude for the Darshana or Vision of the Lord that he got due to the Saint. This Samadhi-Shrine is there even now.

ABOUT ARUNAGIRINATHAR'S TIRUPPUGAZH SONGS

Since Arunagiri travelled on foot the whole of India (including Sri Lanka and up to Mount Kailasa in the Himalayas) and also he stayed in many towns for several days, and for many years at Tirutthani, we can safely presume that the whole pilgrimage could have taken 10 to 15 years, atleast. From the day he was ordained till the completion of his pilgrimage, Arunagiri is said to have given 16000 Tiruppugazhs, though only about 1300 are available.

Here we may try to see why we have only about 1300 Tiruppugazhs available when he is said to have given 16000 of them. What happened to the remaining songs? It is believed that during Arunagiri's time debauchery was rampant and some go even to the extent of saying that no man was free from it, though it is hard to believe. There are/were/have always been good and God-fearing men. Perhaps God Himself must have ordained Arunagiri with the main mission of saving the masses from this prevailing problem, by giving his own experiences with the prostitutes as well as showing how prayer and surrender to the Lord have saved him. Since both experiences are his own and not 'attributions', they touch and melt the hearts of the readers/singers/listeners. Thus those who were deeply involved in prostitution were touched and awakened by the first-hand and direct experiences of Arunagiri, as they tallied with their own experiences. None has spoken the truth so frankly and vividly like Arunagiri. He is forthright and direct in his criticism and scolding of the prostitutes who lure men into their net. Even among the available 1300 and odd Tiruppugazhs, about 500 only are without reference to the prostitutes and suitable for singing in public where men and

women sing together. The remaining ones have such a vivid description of the limbs, gestures and behaviour as well as the voluptuousness of the prostitutes and all acts of carnal pleasure, that anyone would feel shy to sing them in public. Perhaps the non-available ones were still worse in their description. But, as explained earlier, (see page lix) there is a purpose in Arunagiri doing so, which must have been the Will of God. (1) To save teen-age, young adults who are susceptible to be lured by the prostitutes, from falling into their net, because of their age. The Tiruppugazhs act as deterrents and warning-signs to them, "Beware! Don't go near that 'fire'. You will get brunt, as it happened with me!!" (2) To those who are already involved with the prostitutes and suffer, and want to come out but unable to do so, not having the will-power -- those songs where Arunagiri invokes the Lord's grace to save him will help them to free themselves. Such songs are **plenty** and being in the first person, they melt the hearts of those who sing them and in a mysterious manner the Lord saves them. (3) Then there are some in which Arunagiri gives his miserable experiences and also the Lord's grace that saved him. Those songs are for those who have come out of the courtesans' clutches, as thanks-giving and also as a safeguard against falling back into it.

Thus, Arunagiri's Tiruppugazhs acted as an unfailing remedy for the then prevailing malady of debauchery, and helped the masses in every situation. So they all sang them with great devotion and admiration. Because of their miraculous power to transform the minds of people, the songs spread like wild fire and people in all the four directions began to sing them even in his life time, as Arunagiri says in T-384 (*Patthar ganapriya*). They derived immense benefit from them which slowly weaned them from the prostitutes and gradually freed them from their clutches. But then why did they disappear

afterwards, and hardly 10% of the 16000 songs only are available now? It is a mystery! However, the reason is not far to seek. Because, even among the available 1300 and odd songs only about 500 are suitable for singing in public! From this we can easily imagine that the rest of the songs should have been awfully descriptive of the courtesans and carnal acts such that anyone would shy away from singing them in Bhajan-Mandalies, in the midst of mixed devotees of both the sexes. Even though they are descriptions of the prostitute women, they certainly offend the sentiments and honour of household ladies. Thus people slowly dropped singing such songs and eventually they went out of circulation or use and disappeared, maybe within a century or so after Arunagiri. However, by that time prostitution should have been contained within reasonable limits, and those songs have served the purpose for which they were intended, and they were no more needed. We may not be wrong if we presume so, because it is mostly those Tiruppugazh songs only that seem to have disappeared and not the entire lot of Tiruppugazhs or the other works of Arunagiri or the works of other saints of even much earlier times, like Thevaaram, Thiruvaachagam, Thirukkural, Thiru Murugaatruppadai, etc. It is also quite possible that the courtesans had a hand in it, because it affected their 'business'. They and their paramours (or agents) might have destroyed whatever Tiruppugazhs they could lay their hands on, in which process it is also likely that some of the 'good' ones might have been lost!

However, even these 1300 and odd songs available now are more than enough; they are a treasure house. They are safe and will not be lost, thanks to the dedicated efforts of Sri Pillai and his revered father who collected them with great effort and got them printed and published. Had the printing facility been available in Arunagiri's time, though unfortunately not, we

would be having all his 16000 songs! But it must have been the Will of God that they should disappear!! Even as Sri Pillai has got printed all the available Tiruppugazhs with meaning, in Tamil, similarly revered Sri N. Gopala Sundaram Avl has done an inestimable service by publishing all the Tiruppugazhs in Tamil, with meaning in Tamil, and also with transliteration and meaning in English, so that non-Tamil-knowing devotees (including those who can only speak/understand Tamil but not read or write) can also sing and understand them. (*This is available in the website www.kaumaram.com*)

Arunagiri's Tiruppugazh songs had a special charm of their own. These poems appealed to the people and touched their hearts because of their beauty, style, rhythm, depth of meaning and, above all, being filled with the grace of the Lord Who commissioned him to sing them. Arunagiri's mission was moral regeneration, religious unity and dissemination of spiritual wisdom. The Tiruppugazh poems were felt to be a boon by *one and all* – the sensuous man found not only his deplorable condition portrayed but also a way out shown; vain Pundits who wasted their time in debates were made to see their folly; devotees who needed more inspiration and guidance found verses of surrender and invocation which inspire them as they sing; spiritual aspirants who thirst for wisdom got the required material for contemplation and enquiry, etc. Thus the Tiruppugazh songs were a mine of social, religious and spiritual wealth that could satisfy and lift up each and every kind of person. People were, therefore, easily attracted towards the Tiruppugazh songs. The songs soon became so popular that people in the North and South, in the East and West, began to sing them and dance in ecstasy.

EPILOGUE

We may sum up the glorious life of Saint Arunagirinathar, based on internal evidences, inscriptions, etc., as follows:

Arunagiri was a descendant of the family of Gowda Brahmins, who came from the North and settled in Mullandiram and other villages. He lived in Tiruvannamalai. He was well-versed in Tamil and Sanskrit even from his young age. He had good education and upbringing. He was married and had wife, children, in-laws and other relatives. Probably, for the sake of his education, his parents and he had settled in Tiruvannamalai. Even though married, as fate would have it, he fell a victim to the courtesans of Tiruvannamalai, lost all his wealth and contracted incurable diseases, on account of which he was ridiculed and laughed at by his dear and near ones, including the courtesans. He was not wanted by anyone. Time is a great healer. He became ashamed of himself and felt sorry for having wasted the precious human life. Taking pity on him an elderly person advised him to devote his time in prayer and contemplation on Lord Murugan. As advised, sitting near the temple Gopuram Arunagiri tried to fix his mind on God, but to no avail. Finally, to end this kind of wretched life, and as expiation for the sins committed, he decided to put an end to his life. He climbed the top of the Arunachaleshwarar Temple *Gopuram*, offered a prayer to Lord Murugan and dropped himself down. When he was close to the ground, the all-merciful Lord Skanda, for whom he had love in his heart, held him in His arms, wrote the sacred Mantra on his tongue with His *Vel*, gave a Japa-Mala and commanded him to sing His glories, giving him the first line to commence the sacred mission. The sinner, in a moment, was transformed into a Saint

of the highest realisation, had diverse divine experiences in addition to being cured of all his diseases. He was shining with divine glow. A temple is dedicated to Lord Murugan right at the bottom of the tower (*Gopuram*) where the Lord held him in His arms, with a statue of Arunagiri. It is called the *Gopuraththu Ilayanaar Koil*. He became a renunciate, a wandering monk, in the true sense of the term, ever singing the glory of the Lord. His fame spread in all directions and the king of the country, Pravuda Deva, was all admiration for him and became his devotee. He requested Arunagiri to give him the Lord's Darshana. Accordingly, in an assembly hall arranged for that purpose, when Arunagiri sang the '*Athala Sedanarada*' Tiruppugazh, Lord Murugan appeared from a pillar (*Khamba*) of that hall, and gave Darshana with the dancing Peacock, to the great joy of the king and everyone assembled there. At that Pillar where the Lord appeared a shrine is dedicated for the Lord, called the *Khambattu Ilayanaar Koil*. *Neither the king lost his eye-sight by the Lord's Darshana nor did Arunagiri go to Devaloka as a parrot to fetch Parijata flowers, as told in the traditional and hearsay stories.*

After that event, Arunagiri went on *Sthala-yatra* or pilgrimage, visiting all the shrines of Lord Murugan throughout India and singing the glory of the Lord in all those places. He had different kinds of experience and vision of the Lord at many places. At *Tiruchchendur* he had vision of the Lord as a dancing child. In that town he also won Villuputturar in a literary contest. At a place called *Tirut-thurutti* the Lord appeared in Arunagiri's dream, etched His emblems of the Vel and the Peacock on both his shoulders and commanded him to sing the 'Kandar Anubhuti'. Most probably the 'Kandar Anubhuti' was given by Arunagiri immediately at *Tirut-thurutti*. As wished by Arunagiri at *Pothiya Malai* to be enlisted

in the elite group of Tapasvins like sage Agastya, and as prayed for by him at *Tirutthani* to stay there and do intense Tapasya, the Lord called him to *Tirutthani* again at the fag-end of his pilgrimage, to fulfil both the prayers. He stayed there for some years doing intense penance (*Tapas*), when he also gave the wonderful *Tiru Vaguppus*. As the purpose of giving the *Tiru Vaguppus* was to bring delight to the Lord's heart, there is no reference at all to sex in any of them, and also to fear of death (except in a few). Finally, he returned to his home town of **Tiruvannamalai**, from where his mission had commenced. Thus, he is said to have given 16,000 Tiruppugazh songs (of which about 1300 or so only are available) and composed many other works (Kandar Alankaaram, Kandar Anthaathi, Kandar Anubhuti, etc.,) during the pilgrimage.

THE GLORIOUS END

(The Holy Samadhi Shrine for Saint Arunagirinathar in Thiruvannamalai)

When Arunagiri returned to Tiruvannamalai after the long pilgrimage, the King Pravuda Deva received him with due honour. Arunagiri spent the rest of his life in divine contemplation and meditation, and attained the highest state of *Sayujya* or the Advaitic Realisation of being One with the Almighty Lord Skanda or Parabrahman. When he shed the body, perhaps in gratitude for the extraordinary blessing of having had the Darshana of Lord Skanda due to him, king Pravuda Deva got a Samadhi or Altar built for Arunagiri, wherein is interred his body, with an image of his carved in stone, in the precincts of the Arunachaleshwarar temple in Tiruvannamalai. This Samadhi shrine of Arunagirinathar is there even today.

It will be worthwhile noting that it was in the temple of Arunachaleshwarar in **Tiruvannamalai** that on Day One, when Arunagiri dropped himself from the temple tower, Lord Murugan saved and commissioned him (ஆட்கொண்டது) (*Gopuratthu Ilayanaar Koil*); that the Lord appeared and blessed Arunagiri, the king and the large audience with His darshana (அருளியது) (*Kambatthu Ilayanaar Koil*); and where finally Arunagiri's body was interred when he attained Liberation (அடக்கமானது) (*Arunagirinathar's Samadhi Altar/shrine*). (In that small shrine of Arunagirinathar, the image of his -- picture 3 on page xcviii -- truly represents his physical condition after his long period of Tapasya or austerity in Tirutthani.) All these three monuments are in the temple premises.

Thus did Arunagiri live a glorious life of God-Consciousness, exhibiting many a superhuman deed, lifting people from the quagmire of Samsara and planting them firmly in the awareness of God; and the Saint continues to guide devotees and seeking souls to perfection, lending them the needed support, even today. May the grace of Saint Arunagirinathar be upon us all, always! May the blessings of all saints and sages be upon mankind, for ever and ever!!

THE WORKS OF ARUNAGIRINATHAR

(1) ***Tiruppugazh:*** As Arunagiri was ordained by Lord Murugan to sing His glories, the Saint's main work is the *Tiruppugazh* songs. *Tiru* is God or Divine, and *Pugazh* is glory. Hence, true to the title, it is primarily the glory of God that is sung in these verses which are said to be 16,000 in number, though only about 1,300 are available now. Even from these one can get a glimpse of the extraordinary capacity of the Saint. These Tiruppugazh songs contain information on different

subjects like religion, art, music and literature; the different systems of Yoga like Bhakti, Jnana, Raja, Kundalini, Hatha, etc. Though Lord Murugan is the sole Object of praise, each Tiruppugazh being addressed to Him and ending with '*Perumale*', etc., Arunagiri so dexterously brings in all other deities like Vishnu, Brahma, Siva, Vinayaka, Lakshmi, Sarasvati, Parvati, Kaali, Rama, Krishna, etc., in the capacity of their relationship to Skanda as this or that, and thus glorifies everyone of them. In so doing, Arunagiri brings in innumerable anecdotes, incidents and episodes from the Ramayana, Mahabharata, Srimad-Bhagavata, Periya Puranam, Skanda-Puranam, etc. It is believed that, apart from the purpose of turning the minds of people from sensuality to religion and devotion, the Avatara of Arunagiri heralded a new era of religious unity, tolerance and understanding between the Saivites and Vaishnavites, through his Tiruppugazh songs which, in glorifying Lord Skanda, praise Him as the son of Siva, Uma Devi, etc., as also the son-in-law of Vishnu, Lakshmi, etc., thus bringing about a harmony between the two sects. Indeed this is no small achievement. This praise of all Gods and Goddesses is one of the outstanding features of Arunagiri's Tiruppugazh songs, and is rarely seen in the works of any single saint or poet of the Tamil country.

Another salient feature is the free employment of Sanskrit words, phrases and even complete lines in the Tiruppugazhs and also in the *Kandar Alankaaram*, which exhibits not only Arunagiri's mastery over that language but also his skill to blend it with Tamil, and thus show that the two languages are not incompatible with each other.

Arunagiri's Tiruppugazhs are in the *Santham* metre and he is the pioneer of this type of poems in the Tamil language.

If the available 1,300 and odd Tiruppugazhs themselves disclose so much of the superhuman skill of Arunagiri and his vast range of knowledge in different fields, we can imagine the mine of information and wisdom that could be inherited by us if all the 16,000 songs were to be available to us. Also, it is quite possible that more authentic clues or even definite information might become available on the Saint's life.

(2) ***Kandar Alankaaram:*** This is a work of 107 verses. As the title suggests, it gives a grand description of the Divine personality of Lord Skanda from Feet to Head, and His adventurous deeds, as also descriptions of His consorts, Valli and Deivayanai, His *Vahana* (vehicle), the Peacock, and the Cock. The language or style of the verses is also dramatic in character, kindling the spirit of emotion, or evoking enthusiasm, or admonishing with words jolting and piercing in their effect, such as:

"Is one to study the poems of Vel-Murugan, which free one from rebirth, at the last moment when the terrible Yama, fierce in nature, throws his noose on one's neck and drags?"

"By the touch of the wind created by the movement of the plumage of the Peacock of Lord Murugan, the mount Meru shook; by the footsteps of the Peacock, mountains crumbled to dust; and the seas, filled with this dust, became raised grounds."

"Due to the motion of the Cock's wings, the oceans tore away, the sky broke, the stars dropped and the mountains crumbled."

"O Lord Yama! I am the devotee of the Lord (Skanda) of *Tiruchchendur*. I have the '*Avirodha*' sword of Wisdom before which nothing can stand, with which I shall attack you and put you down with your weapons of 'Sula' and 'Danda'. Come close to me and see (what happens to you), if you dare!"

"O mind! Knowing the transitory nature of wealth, when will you go beyond pleasure and pain? You do not repeat the Names of the Lord, as Vel-Murugan, Vel, etc. How do you hope to get Mukti or liberation?"

"O Hero (Muruga) Who destroyed Surapadma! Though I might be immersed in sex, I shall not forget Thy Vel!"

"By the touch of the Feet of Murugan, Brahma's written words on my head (fate) have been wiped out!"

"To Siva, the ornament is a garland of skulls; to Vishnu, the Tulasi-garland; to the Feet of Murugan, the crown of the Devas' heads and the Kadamba-flower garland; and to the Vel, the ocean, Surapadma and the Krauncha mountain."

"O Yama! I am in the presence of Lord Murugan. If you oppose me, I shall cut you with the Shakti-sword in my hand and make you run away. Therefore, trace your way back."

"Learned men will say: 'The body is perishable, wealth is transitory.' But if one approaches them for charity, they will quietly slip away. These are the people who have no devotion to Vel-Murugan. Wonderful is their wisdom!"

"O Yogis! There is no use of torturing the body through Hatha Yoga. Knowing what Siva-Yoga is through the Upadesa of Murugan, if you become 'silent', you will attain Mukti."

"O Yogis who do hard Yoga-practices! If you meditate on the Lotus-Feet of the Beloved of Valli Devi (Lord Murugan), you shall easily attain Mukti."

(3) ***Tiru Vaguppu:*** This is a work with 25 sections, each one specially devoted to portray the greatness of the different aspects of or matters connected with Lord Murugan, --- His Feet, His Devotees' Group, His principal weapon *Vel*, His

consort Valli, His twelve divine hands, His eye's grace-glance, Arunagiri's Tiruppugazh, etc. Unlike the other works, since each section deals with a particular subject, it is called 'Tiru-Vaguppu'. *Vaguppu* means section or a group of verses and *Tiru* means Divine or pertaining to the Divine. It is held by some that the first 18 sections are only Arunagiri's and that the remaining sections are later interpolations.

(4) ***Kandar Anthaadi:*** This is a work of 100 verses. Each verse is of four lines and mostly all the lines of every verse begin with the same words with, of course, different meanings. *Antha* means end and *Aadi* means beginning, and *Anthaadi* is a particular type of work wherein the last word or phrase of the previous verse forms the beginning of the next verse, --- the *Antha* or end of a verse is the *Aadi* or beginning of the following verse.

It is believed that this work was the outcome of the literary contest between the learned but arrogant Villiputturar and the devout and divine-inspired Arunagiri. The condition was, it is said, that Arunagiri should compose *Anthaadi* songs without interruption and Villiputturar should at once give their meaning, and he who failed to do so would have to accept defeat. As it was composed mainly for the purpose of a literary competition, the language and style are so hard as to baffle even learned scholars, and one can imagine their toughness from the fact that Villiputturar, who had won over all the Tamil poets and *Pundits* of his time, failed even to decipher the 54th song whose four lines comprising 97 letters are composed of letters of only the *Tha-Varga*, i.e., Tha, Thaa, Thi, Thii, Thu, Thuu, etc. Only Arunagiri could give its meaning and even to this date no one attempts to comment on it, except to reproduce Arunagiri's word-to-word meaning.

(5) ***Kandar Anubhuti*:** It is a work of 51 verses. It is held in high esteem as a *Mantra-Sastra* and as the crowning glory of Arunagiri's works, because of its high spiritual value and depth. The verses are short, rather the smallest of all the works of Arunagiri, but they are the most sublime. As the title suggests, it is a work on (the attainment of) God-Experience. It is a philosophical treatise on Advaitic Realisation. Much need not be said about it, as the present work is devoted to its exposition.

(6) ***Vel Viruttam:*** This is a work of 10 poems. The *Vel* is glorified by Arunagiri in all his works in a scattered manner. Not being satisfied with them, Arunagiri seems to have chosen to dedicate a small work exclusively to sing the praises, glory, greatness and the valorous achievements of the *Vel*.

(7) ***Mayil Viruttam:*** *Mayil* means Peacock, -- the *Vahana* or vehicle of the Lord. This work, like the *Vel Viruttam*, is devoted to the glorification of the Peacock which has also been described in Arunagiri's different works. This also is a work of 10 poems.

(8**)** ***Seval Viruttam:*** *Seval* means Cock; and it is the banner-symbol of Lord Murugan. This work consists of 11 poems and deals with the greatness of the banner which is also described in a scattered manner in the other works of the Saint.

(9) ***Tiru Ezhu Kootrirukkai:*** This is a single poem; it comes under the category of *Chitra-Kavi*; it consists of numbers one to seven in ascending and descending orders (as 1; 1-2-1; 1-2-3-2-1; 1-2-3-4-3-2-1; etc.) and is capable of being portrayed or encased in a drawing. It is a rare piece of work, the like of which is composed by a few poets only.

APPENDIX-A

Narakasura and Dipawali

It will be interesting to know how the Divine plant *Paarijata* was brought from Devaloka to this Bhuloka by no less a person than the Supreme Being, Lord Sri Krishna Himself, about 5000 years ago. The *Srimad Bhagavata* recounts this incident in Chapter 59 of the 10th Skanda, a brief summary of which is as follows:

Naraka was a vicious demon (Asura) with supernatural powers. He harassed the gods, snatched Varuna's unique umbrella and the ear-rings of his mother Aditi. He then dislodged Indra from the Mandara mountain, the mountain of the gods. Indra complained to Sri Krishna and sought His help. Lord Krishna, with His wife Satyabhama, mounted His mighty Garuda, flew to Narakasura's capital Pragjyotisha, killed him in a battle and entered his palace. There his mother met the Lord with due prostrations and hymns glorifying Him, and also offered Varuna's umbrella and Aditi's ear-rings. (It is said that she also prayed to the Lord that that day be celebrated by people with joy. Thus we celebrate the Naraka-chaturdasi/Dipawali with a refreshing oil-bath, new clothes, crackers and a dainty feast.) On His way back, Krishna passed by Indraloka and delivered the ear-rings and umbrella to Indra, who thanked the Lord, and worshiped the Lord and Satyabhama. Satyabhama wished to have a *Paarijata* tree from Indra's garden and when Lord Krishna pulled out one and mounted the Garuda with the tree, Indra with all the gods fought with Him to prevent Him from taking the plant to Bhuloka (the land of the mortals), forgetting the Lord's very recent kind acts and His Supreme State. But the Lord routed them in no time and humbled Indra, brought the Paarijata tree

and planted it in Satyabhama's garden in Dwaraka. (Needless to say, in course of time the tree became available everywhere in India, adorning the *Nandavanas* or flower-gardens of Temples and palaces, including Tiruvannamalai.)

The **Naraka-chaturdasi/Dipawali** may also be regarded as the celebration of the day of arrival of the divine plant *Paarijata* upon this earth and planted by the Lord Himself in Dwaraka with His own hands, thus adding to its divine nature; even as the holy Ganga was brought from the higher regions to this earth by the Tapasya of Bhagiratha, but received by Lord Siva in His matted locks and released to flow upon this earth, by which its holy-ness got enhanced. This day is celebrated as the holy **Ganga Saptami**. And, again when she was about to wash away the Ashram of Rishi Jahnu, he sipped the Ganga to arrest her force, and then let her flow through his ears, in a gentle way. Hence Ganga is called **Jahnavi.** From there, the all-purifying Mother Ganga (Jahnavi) flowed with entire modesty and all-embracing filial love and motherly affection. This day is celebrated as the most sanctifying **Ganga Dussera**, when millions of people take a holy dip in the Holy Ganga, throughout its course till Ganga Saagar. Glory to the Paarijata and Mother Ganga. May their blessings be upon us all always.

KANDAR ANUBHUTI

(Tamil Verses)

(Lord Skanda)

வேலும் மயிலும் துணை

கந்தர் அநுபூதி

அருணகிரிநாதர்—திருச்செங்கோடு

(The holy image of Saint Arunagirinathar
at Thirucchengodu)

கந்தர் அநுபூதி

காப்பு

நெஞ்சக் கனகல்லு நெகிழ்ந்து உருகத்
தஞ்சத்தருள் சண்முகனுக்கு இயல்சேர்
செஞ்சொற் புனைமாலை சிறந்திடவே
பஞ்சக்கரவானை பதம் பணிவாம்.

நூல்

ஆடும்பரி வேல் அணிசேவல் எனப்
பாடும் பணியே பணியாய் அருள்வாய்
தேடும் கயமா முகனைச் செருவில்
சாடும் தனியானை சகோதரனே. 1

உல்லாச நிராகுல யோக விதச்
சல்லாப விநோதனும் நீ அலையோ
எல்லாமற என்னை இழந்த நலம்
சொல்லாய் முருகா சுரபூ பதியே. 2

வானோ புனல்பார் கனல் மாருதமோ
ஞானோ தயமோ நவில்நான் மறையோ
யானோ மனமோ எனையாண்ட இடம்
தானோ பொருளாவது ஷண்முகனே. 3

வளைபட்டகைம் மாதொடு மக்களெனும்
தளைபட்டழியத் தகுமோ தகுமோ
கிளைபட்டெழு சூருரமும் கிரியும்
தொளைபட்டுருவத் தொடு வேலவனே. 4

மகமாயை களைந்திட வல்லபிரான்
முகமாறு மொழிந்தும் ஒழிந்திலனே
அகமாடை மடந்தையர் என்றயரும்
ஜகமாயையுள் நின்று தயங்குவதே. 5

திணியான மனோசிலை மீது உனதாள்
அணியார் அரவிந்தம் அரும்புமதோ
பணியாஎன வள்ளிபதம் பணியும்
தணியா அதிமோக தயாபரனே. 6

கெடுவாய் மனனே கதிகேள் கரவாது
இடுவாய் வடிவேல் இறைதாள் நினைவாய்
சுடுவாய் நெடுவேதனை தூள்படவே
விடுவாய் விடுவாய் வினையாவையுமே. 7

அமரும்பதி கேள் அகமாம் எனுமிப்
பிமரங்கெட மெய்ப்பொருள் பேசியவா
குமரன் கிரிராச குமாரி மகன்
சமரம்பொரு தானவ நாசகனே. 8

மட்டூர்குழல் மங்கையர் மையல்வலைப்
பட்டூசல்படும் பரிசென்று ஒழிவேன்
தட்டூடறவேல் சயிலத்து எறியும்
நிட்டூர நிராகுல நிர்ப்பயனே. 9

கார்மாமிசை காலன்வரில் கலபத்து
ஏர்மாமிசை வந்தெதிரப் படுவாய்
தார்மார்ப வலாரிதலாரி எனும்
சூர்மாமடியத் தொடு வேலவனே. 10

கூகாஎன என்கிளை கூடி அழப்
போகாவகை மெய்ப்பொருள் பேசியவா
நாகாசல வேலவ நாலுகவி
த்யாகா சுரலோக சிகாமணியே. 11

செம்மான் மகளைத் திருடும் திருடன்
பெம்மான் முருகன் பிறவான் இறவான்
சும்மாஇரு சொல்லற என்றலுமே
அம்மா பொருளொன்றும் அறிந்திலனே. 12

முருகன் தனிவேல்முனி நம்குருவென்று
அருள்கொண்டு அறியார் அறியுந் தரமோ
உருவன்று அருவன்று உளதன்று இலதன்று
இருளன்று ஒளியன்று என நின்றதுவே. 13

கைவாய் கதிர்வேல் முருகன் கழல்பெற்று
உய்வாய் மனனே ஒழிவாய் ஒழிவாய்
மெய்வாய்விழி நாசியொடும் செவியாம்
ஐவாய்வழி செல்லும் அவாவினையே. 14

முருகன் குமரன் குகன்என்று மொழிந்து
உருகும் செயல்தந்து உணர்வென்று அருள்வாய்
பொருபுங்கவரும் புவியும் பரவும்
குருபுங்கவ எண்குண பஞ்சரனே. 15

பேராசைஎனும் பிணியில் பிணிபட்டு
ஓராவினையேன் உழலத் தகுமோ
வீரா முதுசூர்பட வேல் எறியும்
சூரா சுரலோக துரந்தரனே. 16

யாமோதிய கல்வியும் எம்மறிவும்
தாமேபெற வேலவர் தந்ததனால்
பூமேல் மயல்போய் அறமெய்ப் புணர்வீர்
நாமேல் நடவீர் நடவீர் இனியே. 17

உதியா மரியா உணரா மறவா
விதிமால் அறியா விமலன் புதல்வா
அதிகா அநகா அபயா அமரா
வதிகாவல சூர பயங்கரனே. 18

வடிவும் தனமும் மனமும் குணமும்
குடியும் குலமும் குடிபோகியவா
அடியந்தமிலா அயில்வேல் அரசே
மிடியென்று ஒருபாவி வெளிப்படினே. 19

அரிதாகிய மெய்ப்பொருளுக்கு அடியேன்
உரிதா உபதேசம் உணர்த்தியவா
விரிதாரண விக்ரம வேளிமையோர்
புரிதாரக நாக புரந்தரனே. 20

கருதா மறவா நெறிகாண எனக்கு
இருதாள் வனசந்தர என்றிசைவாய்
வரதா முருகா மயில் வாகனனே
விரதா சுரசூர விபாடணனே. 21

காளைக் குமரேசன் எனக் கருதித்
தாளைப் பணியத் தவம் எய்தியவா
பாளைக்குழல் வள்ளிபதம் பணியும்
வேளைச் சுரபூபதி மேருவையே. 22

அடியைக் குறியாது அறியாமையினால்
முடியக் கெடவோ முறையோ முறையோ
வடிவிக்ரம வேல் மகிபா குறமின்
கொடியைப் புணரும் குணபூதரனே. 23

கூர்வேல்விழி மங்கையர் கொங்கையிலே
சேர்வேன் அருள்சேரவும் எண்ணுமதோ
சூர்வேரொடு குன்று தொளைத்த நெடும்
போர்வேல புரந்தர பூபதியே. 24

மெய்யேஎன வெவ்வினை வாழ்வை உகந்து
ஐயோ அடியேன் அலையத் தகுமோ
கையோ அயிலோ கழலோ முழுதும்
செய்யோய் மயிலேறிய சேவகனே. 25

ஆதாரம் இலேன் அருளைப் பெறவே
நீதான் ஒருசற்றும் நினைந்திலையே
வேதாகம ஞான விநோத மனோ
தீதா சுரலோக சகாமணியே. 26

மின்னேநிகர் வாழ்வை விரும்பிய யான்
என்னே விதியின் பயன் இங்கிதுவோ
பொன்னே மணியே பொருளே அருளே
மன்னே மயிலேறிய வானவனே. 27

ஆனா அமுதே அயில்வேல் அரசே
ஞானாகரனே நவிலத் தகுமோ
யானாகிய என்னை விழுங்கி வெறும்
தானாய் நிலைநின்றது தற்பரமே. 28

இல்லேஎனும் மாயையில் இட்டனை நீ
பொல்லேன் அறியாமை பொறுத்திலையே
மல்லேபுரி பன்னிரு வாகுவில் என்
சொல்லே புனையும் சுடர் வேலவனே. 29

செவ்வான் உருவில் திகழ்வேலவன் அன்று
ஒவ்வாதது என உணர்வித்த (அ)துதான்
அவ்வாறு அறிவார் அறிகின்றது அலால்
எவ்வாறு ஒருவர்க்கு இசைவிப்பதுவே. 30

பாழ்வாழ்வு எனுமிப் படுமாயையிலே
வீழ்வாய்என என்னை விதித்தனையே
தாழ்வானவை செய்தனதாம் உளவோ
வாழ்வாய் இனிநீ மயில்வாகனனே. 31

கலையே பதறிக் கதறித் தலையூடு
அலையே படுமாறு அதுவாய் விடவோ
கொலையேபுரி வேடர்குலப் பிடிதோய்
மலையே மலைகூறிடு வாகையனே. 32

சிந்தாகுல இல்லொடு செல்வமெனும்
விந்தாடவி என்று விடப்பெறுவேன்
மந்தாகினி தந்த வரோதயனே
கந்தா முருகா கருணாகரனே. 33

சிங்கார மடந்தையர் தீநெறிபோய்
மங்காமல் எனக்கு வரம்தருவாய்
சங்க்ராம சிகாவல ஷண்முகனே
கங்காநதி பால க்ருபாகரனே. 34

விதிகாணும் உடம்பை விடா வினையேன்
கதிகாண மலர்க்கழல் என்று அருள்வாய்
மதிவாணுதல் வள்ளியை அல்லது பின்
துதியா விரதா சுரபூபதியே. 35

நாதா குமரா நமவென்று அரனார்
ஓதாய் என ஓதியது எப்பொருள் தான்
வேதாமுதல் விண்ணவர் சூடுமலர்ப்
பாதா குறமின் பதசேகரனே. 36

கிரிவாய்விடு விக்ரம வேல் இறையோன்
பரிவாரம் எனும் பதம் மேவலையே
புரிவாய் மனனே பொறையாம் அறிவால்
அரிவாய் அடியோடும் அகந்தையையே. 37

ஆதாளியை ஒன்றறியேனை அறத்
தீதாளியை ஆண்டது செப்புமதோ
கூதாள கிராத குலிக்கிறைவா
வேதாள கணம்புகழ் வேலவனே. 38

மாவேழ் சனனம்கெட மாயைவிடா
மூவேடணை என்று முடிந்திடுமோ
கோவே குறமின்கொடி தோள்புணரும்
தேவே சிவசங்கர தேசிகனே. 39

வினை ஓடவிடும் கதிர்வேல் மறவேன்
மனையோடு தியங்கி மயங்கிடவோ
சுனையோடு அருவித் துறையோடு பசும்
தினையோடு இதணோடு திரிந்தவனே. 40

சாகாது எனையே சரணங்களிலே
காகா நமனார் கலகம் செயுநாள்
வாகா முருகா மயில் வாகனனே
யோகா சிவஞான உபதேசிகனே. 41

குறியைக் குறியாது குறித்தறியும்
நெறியைத் தனிவேலை நிகழ்த்திடலும்
செறிவற்று உலகோடு உரை சிந்தையுமற்று
அறிவற்று அறியாமையும் அற்றதுவே. 42

தூசா மணியும் துகிலும் புனைவாள்
நேசா முருகா நினதன்பு அருளால்
ஆசா நிகளம் துகளாயின பின்
பேசா அநுபூதி பிறந்ததுவே. 43

சாடும் தனிவேல் முருகன் சரணம்
சூடும்படி தந்தது சொல்லுமதோ
வீடும் சுரர்மாமுடி வேதமும் வெம்
காடும் புனமும் கமழும் கழலே. 44

கரவாகிய கல்வியுளார் கடைசென்று
இரவாவகை மெய்ப்பொருள் ஈகுவையோ
குரவா குமரா குலிசாயுத குஞ்
சரவா சிவயோக தயாபரனே. 45

எந்தாயும் எனக்கருள் தந்தையும் நீ
சிந்தாகுலம் ஆனவை தீர்த்து எனையாள்
கந்தா கதிர்வேலவனே உமையாள்
மைந்தா குமரா மறைநாயகனே. 46

ஆறாறையும் நீத்து அதன்மேல் நிலையைப்
பேறா அடியேன் பெறுமாறு உளதோ
சீறாவருசூர் சிதைவித்து இமையோர்
கூறா உலகம் குளிர்வித்தவனே. 47

அறிவொன்று அறநின்று அறிவார் அறிவில்
பிறிவொன்று அறநின்ற பிரான் அலையோ
செறிவொன்று அறவந்து இருளே சிதைய
வெறிவென்றவரோடு உறும் வேலவனே. 48

தன்னந்தனி நின்றது தான் அறிய
இன்னம் ஒருவர்க்கு இசைவிப்பதுவோ
மின்னும் கதிர்வேல் விகிர்தா நினைவார்
கின்னம் களையும் க்ருபைசூழ் சுடரே. 49

மதிகெட்டு அறவாடி மயங்கி அறக்
கதிகெட்டு அவமே கெடவோ கடவேன்
நதிபுத்திர ஞான சுகாதிப அத்
திதிபுத்திரர் வீறடு சேவகனே. 50

உருவாய் அருவாய் உளதாய் இலதாய்
மருவாய் மலராய் மணியாய் ஒளியாய்க்
கருவாய் உயிராய் கதியாய் விதியாய்க்
குருவாய் வருவாய் அருள்வாய் குகனே. 51

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N.V. Karthikeyan offering Aarati
to Lord Skanda in the Bhajan Hall
of the Sivananada Ashram, Rishikesh
during the Skanda Shashthi Pooja (Oct. 2017)

THE ESOTERIC

KANDAR ANUBHUTI

OR

THE SECRET TEACHING ON

GOD-EXPERIENCE

(A Treatise on Adwaitic Realisation)

OF

SAINT ARUNAGIRINATHAR

THE ESOTERIC

KANDAR ANUBHUTI

==========

KAAPPU

==========

நெஞ்சக் கனகல்லு நெகிழ்ந்து உருகத்
தஞ்சத்தருள் சண்முகனுக்கு இயல்சேர்
செஞ்சொற் புனைமாலை சிறந்திடவே
பஞ்சக்கரவானை பதம் பணிவாம்.

Nenjak kanakallu nekizhnthu urukath
Thanjath-tharul shanmukhanukku iyalser
Senchor punai-maalai chiranthidave,
Panjak karavaanai patham panivaam.

Even the hardened stony heart melts and liquefies
By the grace, to one that takes refuge, Shanmukha bestows;
That this sweet word-garland to Him be glorious
To the five-armed Lord's Feet bow let us.

"Let us bow to the Lotus-Feet of the Five-armed Lord (Sri Vighneshvara) for the renown of this garland (*Kandar Anubhuti*), knit of beautiful Tamil language, to Lord

Shanmukha, Who, on the one that takes refuge in Him, showers His Grace that liquefies and melts even a hardened stony heart."

Commentary

'*Kaappu*' means 'Protection' -- protection from obstacles. Kaappu is the invocatory song -- a poem of prayer for the removal of obstacles -- which usually precedes a work. It is customary to invoke the blessings of Lord Sri Ganesa for the success of one's undertaken task. Arunagirinathar, too, adorns his work *Kandar Anubhuti* with a Kaappu for its success and renown. Even in this poem, wherein he bows to the Lord of five-arms (Sri Vighneshvara) invoking His grace for the success and renown of the work, he exquisitely glorifies Lord Skanda as his love for Him was supreme. By the blessings of Lord Sri Ganesa the work will also bring glory to those who sing, write, listen to or read it, as well as to the saint himself, to the Tamil language, and to the Lord, too.

For the fame of *Kandar Anubhuti* let us bow to Lord Sri Ganesa of five-arms. Tamil scriptures vividly describe the functions of the five arms thus: the hand with the stylus does the work of creation; that with the *Modaka* (sweet-ball), preservation; that with the *Ankusa* (Goad), destruction; that with the *Paasa* (cord), veiling; and the trunk, the fifth-arm, the work of bestowing grace.

This work is a garland made of beautiful, sweet Tamil language. Flower-garlands fade away by usage in a couple of hours or at the most in a few days. But this word-garland wafts more and more fragrance as days pass by, because more and more people will come to know of it, sing or read it and be benefited by it. Hence, such word-garlands are more pleasing to the Lord than flower-garlands.

The Lord blesses those that take refuge in Him even as the sun gives warmth to those who expose themselves to it. It is the

nature of the sun to give warmth; so also it is the *Svabhava* (spontaneous nature) of the Lord to melt the desire-hardened hearts of devotees, who take shelter under His Feet, repenting for their past wrongs, and surrender themselves totally, realising their helplessness and the greatness of the Lord.

The Avatara or Incarnation of Lord Skanda

The *Avatara* or Incarnation of Lord Skanda according to the Tamil scripture known as the "*Kanda Puraanam"* is as follows. In the fights that go on perpetually between the Devas (gods) and Asuras (demons), the Devas defeated the Asuras repeatedly. To avenge for their defeat, the demoness Surasa got through the sage Kashyapa, by a deceitful marriage with him, three sons, viz., Soorapadma, Simhamukha, and Taaraka. She asked them to do severe *Tapas* or austerity, propitiating Lord Siva. Accordingly they did and obtained from Him many boons by which they became invincible. They started giving trouble to the gods, invaded and captured Devaloka (*Svarga*) and subjected the Devas to great humiliation. Soorapadma extracted from them even menial service, and as days passed by, his atrocities also increased. Unable to bear the torture any more, the Devas, under the leadership of Indra and headed by Brahma and Vishnu, approached Lord Siva in Mount Kailasa for help. They surrendered themselves to the Lord and cried out to Him for immediate protection.

Moved by compassion, Lord Siva assured them His help. As, however, the Lord again was absorbed in meditation, the Devas entreated *Kamadeva* (cupid) to awaken the Lord from his Samadhi. Though unwilling, due to fear of the Lord, yet compelled by the Devas, Kama disturbed the Lord by his flowery arrows. Thus, disturbed in meditation, the *Tejas* or Light that flashed forth from His third eye burnt *Kamadeva*

(Cupid). The Devas at once fell at the Lord's Feet and prayed for help without any further delay.

As the Asura had obtained boons from Lord Siva, He could not kill him in His form as Siva. The Lord, therefore, assumed His original form of six faces and from the third eye of each face a Light (*Tejas*) emanated, which filled all space. The Devas, bewildered at this unexpected happening, trembled in fear, but the Lord assured them safety and withdrew the Light into His own hands. He passed on that Light to *Vayu* (Wind-God) and *Agni* (Fire-God) commanding them to carry it to Ganga. But when they hesitated to receive it because of its mighty power, Lord Siva granted special power to them. *Vayu*, with the strength granted by the Lord, carried it somehow, with great difficulty, for some distance, and unable to carry it any further, gave it to *Agni*, who hurried and threw it into Ganga. Ganga was also unable to bear the power of the Light and she carried it on to a small pond surrounded by Sara-shrubs called *Saravanappoigai*. Alas! Nothing happened to the pond, but a wonder took place. Immediately on reaching the pond, the Light assumed the form of six-beautiful babies, with Divine splendor, lying on six lotuses. Vishnu, Brahma, and all the gods assembled there to witness this *Avatara* or Incarnation of Lord Subrahmanya. They asked the six *Kirttika Devis* to suckle the six babies and feed them, which they did. In the meantime, Lord Siva and Parvati arrived there, and when Parvati took the six babies, they joined together into a single body with six faces and twelve hands. This is Lord *Shanmukha* (Lord with six-faces) whose nature it is to bless those who take refuge in Him, as that is the purpose of His Avatara. He is called *Skanda* ("one who leaped out," referring evidently to the way of His emanation from Siva's third eyes); Skanda also means "the joined One" as the six-babies joined and assumed a single form. He is called *Kaarttikeya*, as He was nursed by the Kirttika Devis (3rd constellation of the 27 stars); He is called

Saravanabhava, as He was born in the pond of Sara-plant (*Saravanappoigai*). In the Tamil language and literature He is more popularly known as *Murugan,* the Lord of Eternal Youth and Beauty. He is called *Subrahmanya*, as He is Brahman, the Absolute, Himself. The Lord has many other names, too. Since he was born of the third eye (Eye of Wisdom) of Lord Siva, He stands for Supreme Divine Wisdom and is an incarnation of pure Consciousness (Siva). A remembrance of these facts will help us much in our study of the work of *Kandar Anubhuti*.

Kacchiyappa Sivachariar (about the 9th century A.D.) who was ordered by Lord Shanmukha to compose the work '*Kanda Puraanam*' in Tamil, by giving him the first line for his work, precisely and beautifully portrays the Lord's Avatara thus, in two verses:

"That Consciousness-Mass (Light or Tejas) (சோதிப் பிழம்பு(which is called the **Supreme Brahman**, which is formless, with form, beginningless, One and also the many, -- That assumed a form with six grace-showering faces and twelve hands and took *Avatara* or Divine Incarnation as ***Murugan***, for the redemption of the world."

"That Ever-Pure, Omnipresent and All-full Lord Siva, who cannot be comprehended by speech, or mind, or even by the Vedas, assuming the form of six-sweet babies, was gracefully lying on six-lotuses in the *Saravanappoigai*, showering His Blessings."

The glory of the six faces is indescribable, great details of which are given in the Tamil scriptures. The six-faces represent the Spirit and the five elements of which He is the Lord -- the Tejas that filled space (ether) was carried by Vayu (air) and Agni (fire), thrown into the Ganga (water) and shoved into the pond (earth). The six-faces face the directions east, west, north, south, upward, and downward — which shows that His vision is everywhere, that He is all-pervading and all-knowing. The

six-faces represent the six attributes of *Bhagavan — Jnana* (wisdom), *Vairagya* (non-attachment), *Kirti* (fame), *Aishvarya* (wealth), *Sri* (prosperity), and *Bala* (strength). The six faces also represent the six Chakras, the plexuses or centers of spiritual energy in the astral body, -- Muladhara, Swadhishthana, Manipura, Anahata, Vishuddha and Ajna Chakras. Each face of Lord Shanmukha is of the form of the deity presiding over the respective Charka, namely, Ganesa, Brahma, Vishnu, Rudra, Maheshvara, and Sadasiva.

To fulfill the purpose of the Avatara, Lord Skanda, after performing many *Bala-lilas* (divine sportful plays in His childhood), assumed leadership (*Senapati*) of the Devas, attacked the Asuras and killed them all with His Vel, which represents *Jnana Sakti*. He released the Devas and restored them back to heaven. In gratitude, Indra, the king of heaven, offered his daughter *Deivayaanai* in marriage to Lord Skanda. Deivayaanai stands for *Kriya Sakti*. He then married *Valli-Devi*, who represents *Iccha Sakti*. Thus, Lord Skanda is the Lord of *Saktis* and confers boons to those that take refuge in Him. He resides in the heart-cave of His devotees and is therefore known as *Guha* or *Guhan*.

Lord Skanda is not merely the Commander-in-Chief of the Deva-army and a destroyer of Asuras, but the Supreme Being Himself who took Avatara for a specific purpose; even as Lord Krishna is not merely the son of Yashoda or the killer of Kamsa or the charioteer of Arjuna, but Bhagavan Himself, as revealed in the Bhagavad Gita. In fact this Skanda Avatara is perpetually taking place in creation and in one's life. Whenever and wherever there is a need for the intervention of the Lord to set things right, He manifests Himself then and there in a manner necessary to tackle the situation. He took Avatara as a small boy (*Vaamana*) and not as the terrible *Parasurama*, or Lord Rama, or Lord Krishna to conquer Bali. Where a particular aspect of Him is sufficient to meet a particular situation, He will

not manifest Himself more than what is necessary, though He is all prowess. He is the greatest economist, not more and not less, but what is just needed. Hence, He often helps the devotees with the needed physical strength, intellectual understanding, and even material things from outside but does not manifest Himself and appear before them though they wish it, because it is not necessary. He appears in various forms and with different names at different times, with various powers to fulfill various purposes — all from our standpoint — but He is what He is, irrespective of what He appears to us or what we understand Him to be.

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VERSE-1

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ஆடும்பரி வேல் அணிசேவல் எனப்
பாடும் பணியே பணியாய் அருள்வாய்
தேடும் கயமா முகனைச் செருவில்
சாடும் தனியானை சகோதரனே.

Aadumpari vel ani seval enap-
Paadum paniye paniyaai arulvaai
Thedum kayamaa mukanai cheruvil
Saadum thani yaanai sahotharane.

The dancing Peacock, Vel, and the beautiful Cock ----
Thus, to sing, grant me this service as my holy task;
O Brother of Vinaayaka peerless! Who in battle kills,
The searching Asura, Gajamukha, with face elephant's.

"O Lord! the (younger) brother of the peerless Lord Sri Ganesa — who kills in battle the Asura *Gajamukha* who always searches for the Devas to face him in battle! Grant me as my holy lifetime task, the divine *Seva* of singing as, 'The Dancing Peacock, the Vel, and the Beautiful Cock.'"

Commentary

The work *Kandar Anubhuti* commences with this verse and the verse begins with the word "*aadum*" which contains 'A', 'U', and 'M', meaning "AUM/OM." Thus, the work commences with the auspicious 'OM' or Pranava, the most sacred Mantra. And the first-line "*aadum pari vel aniseval*" has in it hidden the great Mantra, in Tamil, "*OM Velum Mayilum*

Thunai," which means "The Vel and the Peacock are (my) protection or support." The prayer is for the blessedness of constantly repeating this great mantra, "*Om Velum Mayilum Thunai*", or any Mantra for the matter of that.

The Peacock, in its dancing pose, symbolises OM. Vel stands for Supreme Knowledge. The Cock announces in the early hours of dawn the advent of light or sun, and the divine Cock on the banner of the Lord indicates the advent of Wisdom, *Jnana-Surya*. In that alerted condition of crowing, the cock looks more beautiful than otherwise, hence Arunagirinathar says, "the beautiful cock." It is interesting to note that the adjectives "dancing" and "beautiful" have been added to the peacock and cock, respectively, but no adjective to the Vel. Because the Vel, which is pure Knowledge and identical with the Lord Himself, stands not in need of any adjectives; it gives value for everything and nothing can add to its glory.

In some of the verses, the Vel is referred to as the "Sharp-Vel," "Incomparable-Vel," "Victory-Vel," etc., but they are not adjectives to the Vel; they only denote that particular aspect of the Vel which is invoked, according to the context in the respective verses.

'Gaja' means elephant, and 'mukha' means face. Gaja-mukha was an Asura with an elephant's face. He had obtained boons of non-destruction by any *astra* or *sastra* (weapons), from Lord Siva. His only work was to trouble the Devas in Svarga. He sought after them and attacked them. The Devas represented their condition before Lord Siva and sought His help to kill the Asura. Under instructions from Lord Siva, Lord Ganesa, who too has an elephant's face, engaged the Gajamukha Asura in battle and killed him, a job which none else could do. Hence He is addressed as the 'Peerless Ganesa'.

Since the work '*Kandar Anubhuti*' is a 'treatise' on *Anubhuti* or God-realisation, it is all practice from the very beginning, because mere philosophising will lead one nowhere. Hence, an introduction into a life of *Sadhana* is made in the first verse itself, by way of taking to a systematic practice of Japa or *Naama-smarana* (repetition of the Lord's Name and singing His glories). We have seen that "*Aadum Pari Vel ani Seval*" contains the Mantra '*Om Velum Mayilum Thunai*', and the Sadhaka or seeker prays that he be blessed with the sole task of constantly singing this (or any) Mantra, His glories and chanting His Names, --- *Paadum Paniye Paniyaai Arulvaai*. This clearly implies that the treatise is primarily meant for whole-souled aspirants or seekers who are dedicated to the practice of Sadhana, to seek and attain God.

When does this holy wish to seek God arise in one's life? It is a mystery! அவன் அருளால் அவன்தாள் வணங்கி -- '*Avan Arulaal Avan Thaal Vanangi*' --- "By His grace, one resorts to, or worships, His Feet." The '*Avadhuta Gita*' says: '*Ishwara Anugrahaat eva pumsaam Adwaita Vaasana*' – "Only by the grace of Ishwara (God) that an aspiration to realise God arises in a person."

When one has seen through life, its pleasures, pains and vicissitudes; when one has had enough of this world; when one gets fed up with the vain pursuit of pleasure and wealth which ends in sorrow; he feels that there is nothing worth achieving here in this world. Everything here is passing and perishable. What he needs is something lasting, but does not know what it is and how to achieve it. He is whole-heartedly looking for it. It is then that the grace of God comes to his rescue and his mind is turned towards God in some mysterious manner. It may be a critical moment, a crisis or calamity in his life, a scripture that comes into his hands by chance, a Satsanga or spiritual discourse he is taken to willy-nilly, a word from an elder or a

child, or anything for the matter of that, which makes him realise that everlasting happiness can be found only in God and resort to God is the only way. Thus his mind is turned towards God in a mysterious manner. It is for such aspiring souls that this scripture, the *Kandar Anubhuti*, is primarily meant, not for those to whom this world is still a pleasure-garden.

(Important Note: '*Paadum paniye paniyaai arulvaai*' -- "Grant me the only task of singing God's glories." Who offers this prayer? Is Arunagiri asking this for himself? No. Certainly NOT. Because when Arunagiri, repenting for his wrong deeds, dropped himself from the temple tower, the Lord saved him and commanded him to sing His glories and gave him the first line to start with. Since then Arunagiri's whole life was one of continuous prayer and singing the Lord's glory, -- thousands of Tiruppugazh, Kandar Alankaram, etc., -- till the end of his life. When he gave the *Kandar Anubhuti*, he was already immersed in the Bliss of God, rather intoxicated with Divine Love. He was already a Jivanmukta, a fully Illumined Saint. Hence it would be meaningless to assume that he offers this prayer for himself. It has to be of someone in whose position he places himself and sings. It is the prayer of a Sadhaka or seeker of God who has just been awakened to the purpose of life in a mysterious manner (as stated above) and commences his spiritual life for realising God. This and many of the verses are sung in the first person, so that when we sing them they not only become our prayer but also evoke the needed feeling in us and produce the intended effect/benefit in us. Because the verses are sung in the first person, we should not make the mistake of taking them to be Arunagiri's prayers for himself or that they represent his personal problems or experiences. **Thus in no verse does the prayer offered or the condition mentioned or experience revealed refer to Arunagiri himself, i.e., they do not refer to his personal life or experience. They represent the condition/experience of a**

seeker or Sadhaka; hence the Title: "The Esoteric Kandar Anubhuti". We will do well to remember this point throughout our study of this exposition.)

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VERSE-2

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உல்லாச நிராகுல யோக விதச்
சல்லாப விநோதனும் நீ அலையோ
எல்லாமற என்னை இழந்த நலம்
சொல்லாய் முருகா சுரபூ பதியே.

Ullaasa niraakula yoga vithac-
Challaabha vinothanum nee alaiyo
Ellaamara ennai izhantha nalam,
Sollaai murugaa sura bhoopathiye.

Are Thou not, O Lord! Bliss, Sorrowless, and Yoga,
The Well-wishing, Good-speaking, as also the doer of Lila?
That all-ceasing and ego-losing 'Good' — Moksha,
Pray, instruct me, O Muruga! O Lord of Devaloka!

"O Lord, are Thou not (the Lord of) Bliss, freedom from sorrow, and Yoga, Who intends the Good and speaks the Good (to all), and does things as Divine Sport (*Lila*)? That 'Good' of ceasing from all (external attachments) and losing the ego-sense, in Thee — instruct me, O Lord Muruga! O Lord of Devaloka!"

Commentary

"O Lord Muruga, You are possessed of the six attributes; pray instruct me on that 'Good' which is freedom from attachment and egoism." In this prayer, Saint Arunagiri invests the Lord with six novel attributes! What are those? God is *ullasa*. He is bliss. He is happiness. He is joy. He is Sat-chit-

ananda. It is the Ananda or Bliss of the Consciousness or Awareness of His Omnipresence or All-pervading Existence. God is infinite existence identical with absolute consciousness. Because of this, He is ever Blissful. It is Self-bliss and not the happiness derived from something other than itself.

God is *niraagula*—free from sorrow. We are also happy and joyful sometimes, but our happiness is not unalloyed. Even when we are happy over something, thought of something else torments us from within. Also our happiness is short-lived, giving place to pain and bereavement. But God is not so. He is Bliss itself. He knows not what sorrow, pain or unhappiness is. Hence, to clarify this, as it were, in the second attribute He is said to be free from sorrow also.

God is *Yoga*. And what is this happiness and freedom from sorrow due to? He is the Lord of Yoga, the Great Yogi, always in the state of Yoga or Samadhi. He also confers Yoga or union with Him to the aspiring souls.

Now, what does it matter to us, if God is bliss, free from sorrow and Master of Yoga? He is not merely these. He is *Ita* (*Hita*). He is the well-wisher of all and always intends our good, for which is the prayer of this verse.

God is *sallaaba* – possessed of kindly speech, not merely well-wishing. The Lord comes as our Guru and gives us suitable *upadesa* or instruction. We, in our ignorance, do not know what is good for us and often pray for those things which will bring us suffering. The Lord intends our good, speaks what is good, and also does what is good for us.

God is *Vinodhan* -- a great Marvel-Master! He appears as this vast creation, through His sportful *Lila*; and provides the needed field for the *Jivas* to have various experiences according to their Karmas and then He releases them from His Maya by an act of grace. Who can do this marvel except Him!

Thus, the Lord is bliss, freedom from sorrow, and Yoga. This is His essential nature as He is in Himself. The Lord is also good-intending, good-speaking, and good-doing. This is what He is in relation to us. He appears as this vast creation, comes as our Guru, gives us upadesa, guides us, reveals Himself to us and absorbs us into Himself. How He does all this is indeed a wonder, and we can only say that it is His *Lila* or Divine Sport. Thus, the blissful and sorrowless Lord of Yoga intends, speaks and does what is "Good" for us.

Among the innumerable places of worship of Lord Muruga, six are foremost and are called '*Aarupadai Veedu*'. These are *Thirupparankundram* (3 miles from Madurai); *Thiruchendur* (down south on the seashore); *Thiruvaavinankudi* or *Pazhani* (near Dindugal); *Thiruveragam* or *Swamimalai* (near Kumbakonam); *Kundruthoraadal* or *Thirutthani* (near Arakonam) and *Pazhamuthircholai* (near Madurai). The six attributes of the Lord are said to denote these six places of worship. Further, these six places are also said to represent the six Chakras or plexuses in the body, which means that Shanmukha is the Lord of the six Chakras.

"O Lord, are Thou not the Lord of these six attributes? (yes.) Therefore, grant me the 'Good.'" And what is that good? It is a two-fold blessedness -- that of ceasing from everything of the world and also losing the ego-sense in God. This is the "Good," to be aspired for.

'*Ellaam ara'* -- All things should cease, is the first state of blessedness. There are millions and millions of things in the world. Can we put an end to them all? Is it possible? No. Then, how do we cease from them? The only way is to withdraw ourselves from them. Hence, the first step in Yoga is *Yama* (self-restraint) constituting of 5 practices: *Ahimsa* (non-injury), *Satya* (truthfulness), *Brahmacharya* (all-round sense control), *Asteya* (non-covetousness), and *Aparigraha* (non-acceptance of

those things that are not necessary for one's bare existence). When a total sense-control is effected, which implies also control of mind, what remains is the ego-principle or the "I." '*Ennai Izhanda*' --This should also be lost. But where? The ego is the universal asserting itself in a particular, just as the crest of the wave is the sea-water rising in a particular place. As the wave-crest sinks into the ocean, the "I"-consciousness loses itself in God-consciousness. Thus, all-ceasing and mine-losing covers the entire course of *Sadhana*, that of withdrawal from externality and absorption in God, which is the "Good," says Arunagirinathar.

One may wrongly construe that ceasing from all external and losing oneself may mean a negative state of deep sleep, swoon, or void, wherein also these are absent. No, says the saint. That state is, therefore, emphasised as "Good." Sleep, swoon, etc., are states "not good," because they do not lead one to union with God, but revert one to the same miserable condition in which one was before going to these states. So, it is absorption in God, and not going to sleep, etc., that is indicated.

The only 'Good' is God; all others which we consider as 'good' are only "goods." Therefore, losing oneself in God is Good, not losing oneself in the world, because, the world is a source of pain and misery; and God is the source of bliss, of freedom from pain and of Yoga.

When one attains this Good, he becomes a saint; and saints also possess the six attributes of God mentioned in the verse. They are ever blissful, they are always free from pain and sorrow, ever absorbed in Yoga; they are intent upon the good of the world and speak to people what is good to them. They do good to them in various ways, as participants of the divine Lila. This is so because saints are representatives of God on Earth; in and through them God works here.

Commencement of Sadhana or spiritual practice has been indicated in verse-1. The Sadhaka has started doing Japa and singing the glories of the Lord. But the purpose of the practice, or the Goal to be attained, was not specified therein; it is to attain God or Moksha, is pointed out in this verse. So the aspirant now prays to Murugan, the Almighty Lord, for granting him 'That Good' *(Nalam*) which is to let go or abandon all external attachments (*ellaam ara*) and melt or lose one's ego (*yennai izhandha*) in God. The Katha Upanishad calls this '*Nalam*' as the '*Shreyas*'. 'That Good' or '*Nalam*' is Murugan, who is All-Bliss, etc. (*ullasa,* etc.). This Goal should be clear from the very beginning itself, lest the devotee should get side-tracked later by desire for name, fame, wealth, etc. Thus, '*Paadum Paniye paniyaai Arulvaaai*' – "grant me the only task of singing Thy glories" -- is not for yearning a livelihood or to become a famous Sankirtanist, etc. but for attaining God. This prayer is seen fulfilled, in Toto, in verse-43.

In one sense we may say that the remaining verses of the Kandar Anubhuti are a detailed explanation of '*Ellam ara*' (all-ceasing) and '*Yennai izhandha Nalam*' (mine-losing 'Good').

In verse-1 there is no mention of any Name of the Lord, such as Skanda, Muruga, Guha, etc.; He is simply referred to as 'the Brother of Lord Ganesa'. For the first time that a Name is mentioned is in this verse; it is '**Murugan**'. 'Murugan' stands for the Absolute, what is termed as **'Brahman'** in Vedantic texts. Hence, as we have seen earlier, Kacchiyappa Sivachariar (about the 9th century A.D.) who was ordered by Lord Shanmukha to compose the work '*Kanda Puraanam*' in Tamil, by giving him the first line for his work, precisely and beautifully portrays the Lord's Avatara thus: "That Consciousness-Mass (Light or Jyoti) which is called the **Supreme Brahman**, which is formless, with form, beginningless, One and also the many, -- That assumed a form with six grace-showering faces and twelve hands and took

Avatara or Divine Incarnation as **Murugan**, for the redemption of the world." Thus he equates Murugan with Brahman, i.e., 'Murugan' is the Tamil equivalent of the Sanskrit term 'Brahman'. Murugan is Brahman. Strange indeed, isn't it! In the work '*Kanda Puranam*', describing the Lord's Avatara he did not use the Name 'Kanda' or any other but only 'Murugan'. That 'Murugan' means Brahman will be seen confirmed in verse-13.

The prayer of this verse is from the Bhakta's point of view (*Bhakti-Marga* or the path of Devotion). In the next verse it will be from the Vedantic point of view (*Jnana-Marga* or the path of Wisdom). Thus we will see Bhakti and Jnana going hand in hand throughout the work of *Kandar Anubhuti*.

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VERSE-3

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வானோ புனல்பார் கனல் மாருதமோ
ஞானோ தயமோ நவில்நான் மறையோ
யானோ மனமோ எனையாண்ட இடம்
தானோ பொருளாவது ஷண்முகனே.

Vaano punal paar kanal maaruthamo,
Jnaano thayamo navil naan maraiyo
Yaano manamo enai aanda idam,
Thaano porulaavathu shanmukhane.

Is it ether, water, earth, fire, or air?
Is it sense-knowledge, or the (knowledge of the) chanted
Vedas four?
Is it the mind, or the 'I' principle, or Where
The ‘I’ got absorbed, O Shanmukha! What is Reality?

"O Lord Shanmukha! What is it that can be called the Eternal Verity? Is it the earth, water, fire, air or ether; or that state in which (sensory) knowledge arises (or the sensory knowledge that arises from them); or the four Vedas (the source of Knowledge) that are learnt and chanted; or the mind or the 'I' principle; or ‘Where‘ the ‘I’ gets absorbed?" (or ‘THAT’ into which the ‘I’ gets absorbed?)

Commentary

This verse is an expatiation, from the Vedantic point of view, of the devotee’s prayer for ‘That all-ceasing and mine-losing Good’ (*ellaam ara ennai izhandha Nalam*) of Verse-2,

whereby the Sadhaka is also shown the process of rational investigation into the nature of Reality and where it is to be realised. It is something like the Vedantic '*Neti-Neti*' (Not this, not this) doctrine, i.e. go on rejecting the unreal as 'not this' and then what remains is the Reality. The ultimate Reality (*Porul*) is neither the five elements nor sensory knowledge of these elements, nor the Vedas, neither the mind nor the ego (*ellaam ara*); but THAT (*Thaan* or Self) into which the ego or individuality is absorbed (*ennai izhandha*). Reality ever shines in our hearts, as the Self or Atman, and can be realised when the ego is relinquished or absorbed into It.

A thought-provoking verse! What is Reality? The immediate reality before us is the physical world constituted of innumerable objects. But, these are only permutation and combination in different proportions of the *Pancha-Mahabhutas* or five great elements viz., earth, water, fire, air, and ether. Are these elements the Reality? No; neither the objects nor the elements, because these are ever-changing, while Reality is unchanging and eternal. Or, is it the knowledge of these obtained through sense-perception, such as seeing, hearing, touching, tasting and smelling? No; because, the senses themselves are ever-changing. Is it the four Vedas that are regarded as the repository of Knowledge, which are taught and learnt? No. The Vedas (the Upanishads) give methods or techniques of meditation on Reality, but they themselves are not the Reality. That is why it is said that even the Vedas return, unable to reach Reality (Verse-26). Is it the mind that acts on the report of the senses? No. Or is it the ego that asserts itself in everything, everywhere? No. None of these can be the Reality because all these are modifications of *Prakriti*, which by its very nature is ever-changing, being constituted of the three *Gunas*, viz. *Sattva*, *Rajas* and *Tamas*. But the investigating principle is an Intelligence or Consciousness, which is a reflection of the Self or Atman in the intellect or ego, and It

cannot itself be unreal. When it works through the medium of the intellect, ego, mind and the senses, it gets limited to and conditioned by them. But by this process of enquiry, when it withdraws itself from external objects to the senses, from the senses to the mind, from the mind to the intellect and the ego, it stands freed from these limiting adjuncts and then gets absorbed into its Source in the heart, in the Atman or Self. That is the '*Porul'*, the Reality; that is Shanmukhan.

The ego fails in its attempt to know what Reality is, because Reality cannot be 'known' but is to be 'experienced'. Where the ego ceases, there Reality reveals itself. In its search for Reality in the outer world, in sense-knowledge, in the mental functions and even in intellectual understanding, the ego is active and intact, though in subtler and subtler degrees. But when it rejects these as inadequate and withdraws itself, it recedes into the innermost recesses of the heart, where it melts and vanishes into its Source, the Atman or Self. It is like a salt-doll that tries to know the extent and depth of the ocean by looking at it standing on the shore. It cannot. But when it enters the ocean it gets melted and 'knows' the ocean by being it.

The *Maha-Narayana* Upanishad says, "In the center of the body is the sinless (egoless) lotus of the heart, which is the abode of the Supreme Being. Further within that, is the sorrowless ether (Reality). That should be meditated upon."

Cessation of ego is the revelation of Reality. To know the Knower is Knowledge.

It is interesting to observe that throughout the *Kandar Anubhuti*, the saint brings about a blend of the heart and the head, a prayerful mood and an inquiring/investigating nature — *Bhakti* and *Jnana*, as an effective method of Sadhana. They are like the two wings of a bird which help it soar higher and higher into the empyrean of the Bliss of God-Experience. Thus, the

prayer of the devotee (*Bhakta*) of the previous verse is immediately followed and strengthened by the investigative nature of the seeker (*Jnani*) in this verse.

In this study, we will see the process of withdrawal from objects (family, in verse-4) and come to oneself, as the bodily self. Then one is told that he is not the body but the Self, in verse-8. Thus the process of withdrawal goes on from the physical to the subtle and causal levels of oneself until one transcends all these levels and realises the Self or Atman, God or Brahman, in verses-42, 43 and 44.

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VERSE-4

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வளைபட்ட கைம்மாதொடு மக்களெனும்
தளைபட்டழியத் தகுமோ தகுமோ
கிளைபட்டெழு சூருரமும் கிரியும்
தொளைபட்டுருவத் தொடு வேலவனே.

Valaipatta kai maathodu makkalenum,
Thalaipattazhiyat thakumo thakumo
Kilaipattezhu soor uramum giriyum,
Tholaipatturuvat thodu velavane.

Caught up in this fetter called wife and family,
Am I to perish? O Lord, is it fair, is it seemly?
The Mountain and Soora's chest, who rose with retinue,
Thy Vel, Velayudha, You let go, that pierced through.

"O Lord Velayudha! You dispatched Your (Sakti) Vel as to pierce through the chest of the Asura Soorapadma who, with his relatives, rose in battle against You, as also the Krauncha Mountain. (It being so) should I totally perish caught up in the entanglement of bangle-wearing woman (wife) and children (i.e., the bondage of household)? Is it fair, O Lord, is it fair?"

Commentary

The aspirant commenced his Sadhana of Japa, Sankirtan, etc. (verse-1) and also got a clear concept of the goal to be attained (verses 2 and 3). To strengthen his practice he also starts studying holy scriptures, attending Satsangas and spiritual

discourses, visiting Ashrams, etc., all which demand a lot of his time. But he finds obstacles coming in the way of his Sadhana. The gross obstacles present themselves in the beginning; the external circumstances in the form of wife and children are the first to be encountered. The family which has so far been regarded as a source of happiness, having outlived its purpose, is now felt as a bondage, as it saps much of his time and energy and interferes with his Sadhana. Objectively, family constitutes the bondage, but really it is his *Karmas* that brought the situation and bind the soul to *Samsara* or relative existence (Verse-27). Due to ignorance, he thought in the earlier days that family, wealth, position, etc. will make him happy, and he acquired them. They did give him happiness for a while. But once acquired and enjoyed, they start losing their charm, and then a time comes when he can neither live with it happily nor give it up easily. This verse portrays the condition of the seeker in this predicament. He is, therefore, lamenting over his condition. Though he would very much wish to get rid of the family which he feels is a bondage, he is unable to do so because he also feels the attraction for it at the same time. Only by the grace of God do some rare, blessed souls get such a feeling. Thus the seed of Vairagya is seen sown in this verse and it takes time to sprout and grow into a tree before yielding the fruit, which we will see as we proceed further.

Sadhana or spiritual practice is for both men and women and is concerned with the evolution of the soul and not the body, and as there is no such thing as male-soul and female-soul, we would do well to remember that when wife is said to be a fetter to the husband, it is equally applicable the other way also, i.e., the husband is a fetter to the wife. We would do well to remember this point in the explanation of the verses wherever reference to women is involved.

The life of a Sadhaka (male or female) is one of a gradual unfoldment of the Divinity within, which also implies the

overcoming of obstacles, in stages. When one obstacle is overcome, another obstacle which is more powerful and subtle will present itself, demanding more effort and a greater surrender to the Divine, which will draw His Grace. This goes on until the final Goal is reached. A little practice is not enough. Great effort, coupled with Divine Grace, is called forth to overcome the problems, in stages.

Surapadman, the powerful asura, who had obtained many boons from Lord Siva, waged war with Lord Skanda with the help of his entire kith and kin. When all of them were destroyed and the asura was left alone, he fought assuming various forms one of which was that of a huge mango tree with many shooting branches. The Lord cleaved the tree with the Vel. Thus, Lord Subrahmanya pierced the asura in battle, as if in sport, by the dispatch of His divine weapon, the Vel. This is referred to as, "O Lord who dispatches the Vel as to pierce through Soora, who rose with his retinue (or with many branches as a tree)."

Krauncha was one of the lieutenants of the asura Taaraka, the younger brother of Surapadman. Krauncha used to assume the form of a mountain with many paths leading through it. When passersby (especially sages and pious men) entered the mountain through these paths, the mountain (the asura) would close itself from all sides and kill the persons. This was Krauncha's pastime. Once sage Agastya was going southwards from the Himalayas, under the instructions of Lord Siva. Krauncha played the same trick with the sage, who, understanding it in time, through his intuition, cursed Krauncha to remain in the shape of the mountain itself till he came to be destroyed by the Vel of Lord Skanda, in the fullness of time. Lord Skanda, while leading the Deva-forces southwards to attack Surapadman, met this Krauncha mountain and killed the Asura by a throw of His Vel. This Krauncha mountain is there even now near a place called ‘Agastya-muni’ which is some kilometers from Rudra-prayag, on the Badri-Kedar route. On

top of this Krauncha mountain is a temple dedicated to Lord Skanda who killed that Asura.

The mountain referred to in the verse may also mean the *Ezhugiri* (seven-fold) mountain that always followed Surapadman and helped him in many ways, which also was pierced by the Vel of the Lord.

The mountain represents Karma and Surapadman the ego (Avidya). As the mountain and the asura could be killed only by the Vel of Lord Skanda, even so, only *Jnana* (wisdom) can destroy Karma and Avidya. Therefore, the Sadhaka pleads, "O Lord, you destroyed the mountain and the asura. Should I suffer under the bondage of Karma and Avidya (wife and children)?" By ordinary human effort the bondage of Samsara cannot be broken. The attachment to wife and children is so strong that nothing but divine grace can help snap it. This verse is so powerfully worded that a mere repetition of it a few times by any sincere seeker will move him to tears and also move the heart of the compassionate Lord.

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VERSE-5

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மகமாயை களைந்திட வல்லபிரான்
முகமாறு மொழிந்தும் ஒழிந்திலனே
அகமாடை மடந்தையர் என்றயரும்
ஜகமாயையுள் நின்று தயங்குவதே.

Maha maayai kalainthida valla piraan,
Mukamaaru mozhinthum ozhinthilane
Akamaadai madanthaiyar enru ayarum,
Jagamaayaiyul ninru thayanguvathe.

The Mahamaya, the Lord is capable of destroying,
His Name 'Shanmukha' though have I been chanting,
Home, wealth and women, am I still eagerly thinking,
Freed am I not from this irksome Maya's suffering!

"The Lord (Shanmukha) is capable of destroying the *Mahamaya*. Though I have been chanting His Name many times as 'Shanmukha,' 'Shanmukha,' alas! I am still enmeshed in (attached to) this wearisome world-delusion (*Jagan-Maya*) of home, wealth and women, unable to give them up."

Commentary

Usually, in the beginning, a devotee thinks that Sadhana is a simple affair, that a little bit of time devoted to Japa/Parayana daily, as one of the many daily routines, will enable him to realise God. But after continuing the practice for some time (even some years), he finds that neither he can live happily with his family nor give it up easily (Verse-4). Though he is

regularly chanting the Names of the Lord Who is capable of destroying the *Maha-Maya*, he is unable to get himself freed from the world-delusion (*Jagan-Maya*) consisting of home, wealth and women, even though they are wearisome. Why so? The answer is in the verse itself! Because, the Japa or chanting of the Lord's Name is a mechanical lip-chanting (like a CD player) (*Mozhidhal* -- மொழிதல்) and not from his heart. Though he is chanting the Mantras his heart secretly longs for those things, because the mind has not yet tasted the sweetness of the Lord's Name. It is everyone's common experience that when we start doing Japa or Parayana, the mind is concentrated in the beginning, but after some time the chanting goes on mechanically while the mind inwardly broods over its objects of delight even without our being conscious of it. Such is the tricky mind through which Maya works!

The essence of Maya (world-delusion or *Jagan-Maya*) is home, wealth, and women (wife), to which one gets attached. These three are the gross forms of the three basic desires or *Eshanas*, as 'attachment to objects'. The subtle forms of these Eshanas as 'cravings' will be seen in verse-16, while their causal condition as 'inseparable from Maya' in verse-39. More details about the three Eshanas will be explained in those verses. In Tamil, the three Eshanas are called *Mannaasai, Ponnaasai and Pennaasai* (மண்ணாசை, பொன்னாசை, பெண்ணாசை(. Home, wealth and wife are so tiring and painful, yet it is difficult to give up attachment for them. Though one may be engaged in Japa, etc., yet their thoughts persist in the back of the mind and the heart longs for them. This is called *Maya* (reason-less delusion) because even knowing they are wearisome the mind still goes for those very things and does not dwell upon the Lord though He is capable of freeing one from the Mahamaya. So what is required is to patiently continue the practice with love and dedication for a long time until the heart melts while chanting the Lord's Names. Therefore, mere

chanting (மொழிதல்(is not enough; the mind also should think of the Lord without any other thought and the heart 'feel' God, for which God's grace is needed. Hence, the prayer of verse-15: "O Lord when shall You bless me such that repeating, 'Murugan, Kumaran, Guhan,' my mind will melt and the heart feel or experience God…" While he uses the word "uttering" only, in this verse, Arunagiri adds the words "melting" and "feeling" also in verse-15. Hence, mere mechanical utterance is not enough, there should be *Bhava* (feeling). But this is the way, the beginning. When the practice is continued with love and dedication, in course of time, the Mantra-sakti (Sadhana-power), coupled with God's grace, will generate the required *Bhava* and make one's mind melt and the heart feel God within. Then attachment to home, wealth and wife will drop off by themselves.

How beautifully Arunagirinathar portrays facts! It is true that the Lord is powerful enough to destroy *Mahamaya* and it is also true that we are doing Japa of His names. But it is all the more true that we are not freed from Maya. How strange? But this is the experience of everyone who actually practices Sadhana. It may be asserted theoretically that a single repetition of the Lord's Name "can" destroy all one's delusion, and it may be true. But, what is the actual state of affairs? All devotees of Murugan are and have been doing Japa of His Names for years and years. Have all those been freed from Maya? No; not until the grace of God manifests, by which the heart should melt and feel. Arunagirinathar is not a dreamy theoretician. He states facts vividly and touchingly, for which art he is held in high esteem. Saint Thaiyumanavar, wondering at this skill of his, says, "O Arunagiri, my Lord and (spiritual) father! Is there anyone who has said words of fact as vividly as you have? …"

The seeker realises the need for prolonged Sadhana and also God's grace. The old *Samskaras* (impressions from past

lives) are so deeply imbedded in the subconscious that they cannot be easily destroyed. The three Eshanas are very powerful to be overcome like that. They persist and refuse to be wiped out. Great effort is needed. Practice continued for a long time is called forth. Though the Lord's grace alone can destroy them, Sadhana is essential to draw the grace of the Lord.

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VERSE-6

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திணியான மனோசிலை மீது உனதாள்
அணியார் அரவிந்தம் அரும்புமதோ
பணியாஎன வள்ளிபதம் பணியும்
தணியா அதிமோக தயாபரனே.

Thiniyaana mano silai meethu unathaal,
Aniyaar aravintham arumbumatho
Paniyaa ena valli padam paniyum,
Thaniyaa athimoha thayaaparane.

On the hardened stony tablet of my heart
Will Thy beautiful Feet-Lotus manifest?
Asking for service, You bow at Valli's Feet,
O Lord of unquenching Love! O Grace Embodiment!

"O Lord of unquenchable love for Valli; You bow at her Feet asking: 'What service can I do'! O Abode of Infinite Compassion! In this hardened stony-heart of mine, will the beautiful Lotus of Your Feet blossom forth?"

Commentary

The mind is hard like stone because of intense selfishness and attachment to family, wealth, property, etc. (verse-5). How can the Lord's Feet blossom there when it is already filled with selfishness which constricts the heart.

Having realised that his Sadhana or self-effort is insufficient to overcome his attachments, the seeker now takes refuge in the Lord for His mercy and grace, by appealing to His all-compassionate nature (*Dayaaparan*). The Lord, His Feet and His Name -- all mean one and the same.

For the first time Arunagiri refers to **Valli** in this verse, which is very significant. Valli was intent on marrying the Lord and was ever thinking of Him. But she did not know where He is or how to meet Him. However, as her devotion to the Lord was whole-souled, it drew the Lord to her. He Himself went in search of her, though in disguise at first. Valli represents the seeker (Jivatman) who is constantly singing the Lord's Names (Verse-1) but finds himself helpless to overcome Maya (Verse-5). He, therefore, prays to the Lord from the bottom of his heart, citing reference to Valli, to come to his help as He did for her, as He is all-compassionate (*Dayaaparan)*. If the Lord's grace is prayerfully invoked from the bottom of the heart appealing to His grace-embodiment aspect rather than to the philosophically true Maya-destroying aspect, He will be quickly pleased and come as one's Guru.

Sundaravalli and Amritavalli were two daughters of Lord Vishnu. Once they went to Kailasa, the abode of Lord Siva, where they happened to meet Lord Skanda. Enamoured of His beauty, they wanted to become His consorts and expressed their wish to the Lord. The Lord, an abode of compassion, accepted their proposals and ordered that the former be born as daughter of Nambirajan, a hunter king, as *Valli*, and the latter of Indra, as *Deivayaanai*.

Due to a curse of Rishi Kanva, Vishnu and Lakshmi were roaming in a forest as Sivamuni (a dumb saint) and a deer, respectively. When Sivamuni once happened to see the deer, strangely enough, he felt attracted to it, which also returned the love. By these mutual love-looks of both, the deer gave birth to

a female child. Finding the child so different from itself, the deer left it in a pit near a cluster of creepers called *Vallikkodi*. This child was found by Nambirajan, the hunter king, who was overjoyed to have it, as he had no children. She was named as *Valli*. From her childhood, Valli developed great love for Lord Murugan and was determined to marry none but Him. As she grew in age, her devotion to the Lord became more intense and only the thought of the Lord ever occupied her mind. This news was conveyed to Lord Murugan by Devarshi Narada and the Lord also knew that the time to accept her had come.

As was the custom with the hunters, Valli used to protect the corn-crops in the fields, driving away the birds. Lord Skanda went of His own accord, in search of her, to the corn-fields, disguised as a hunter first and then as an old man, tested her devotion and finally revealed His identity. Later on, He married her.

"Not only did the Lord go to where Valli was, but also bowing to her He asked her as to what service He can do for her." The Lord not only unites the devotees with Himself, but also looks after their needs, Himself. Such is the Lord's compassion. Arunagirinathar cites this in this verse to show that the love of the Lord for His devotee is so great that even if the devotee does not know or adopt the right Sadhana but only genuinely loves and wants God, He comes to him of His own accord and accepts him. Valli represents the Jivatman that aspires for union with the Paramatman. Though she was determined to marry the Lord, she knew not where the Lord was and how to attain Him. Similarly, the Jivatman cannot find God by its own effort for the simple reason that it has no knowledge of God; it is ignorant, being a product of Avidya. But if it sincerely aspires for God, He reveals Himself, when the proper time for it comes, as his Guru, trains the disciple and also tests him, and finally absorbs the Jiva into Himself, as the Lord did with Valli. If the Jiva is sincere in its aspiration, God,

in the form of the Guru, will guide the Jiva properly and see that it attains Him. God is infinite mercy and compassion. He is "*Dayaaparan*" — an embodiment of compassion and grace.

The Lord's Feet are compared to lotuses. It is implied here that our heart should melt in His love and become like soft earth, a condition which is necessary for the blossoming of the Lotus.

The word "*Thaniyaa*" may also mean "The Lord Skanda enshrined at *Thiruthani* (one of the six places special for Lord Skanda)."

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VERSE-7

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கெடுவாய் மனனே கதிகேள் கரவாது
இடுவாய் வடிவேல் இறைதாள் நினைவாய்
சுடுவாய் நெடுவேதனை தூள்படவே
விடுவாய் விடுவாய் வினையாவையுமே.

Keduvaai manane gathi kel karavaathu
Iduvaai vadivel iraithaal ninaivaai
Suduvaai neduvethanai thool padave,
Viduvaai viduvaai vinai yaavaiyume.

Means to salvation, O wretched mind! Listen:
Do unrestrained charity, think of the Feet of Vel-Murugan;
Thus, shatter to pieces this misery long-drawn,
And get freed forever from all Karmas, soon.

"O mind, (by taking the unreal, fleeting things of the world as real) you stand to suffer! Now, listen to this means for attaining salvation: Without holding, give in unrestrained charity; (and) meditate on the Lotus-Feet of the Lord having the sharp Vel! (By so doing, you will) burn to ashes the long-persisting misery of birth and death; and soon get freed from all Karmas."

Commentary

To maintain and strengthen his aspiration, the seeker takes recourse to study of holy scriptures, attend Satsangas, seek company of holy men, etc. The prayer of the seeker in verse-6 is so intense and sincere that the response comes at once from

the Lord, in a mysterious manner. The Lord does not come personally, even as in the case of Valli to whom at first He appeared in disguise, but provides the needed advice to the seeker either through a book, an elderly person, a spiritual discourse (Satsanga), etc. or some holy man whom he approaches for guidance. He gets the advice: To give in unrestrained charity without holding, (which will soften the hard heart by feeling for others and also remove attachment for wealth, etc.), and to meditate on the Lord's Feet, (for the blossoming of the Feet-Lotus in the heart thus rendered soft), the combined action of which will attract Divine Grace. '*Ninaivaai*' (நினைவாய்(is a significant word used in this verse. Earlier the seeker was only chanting (மொழிந்து(the Mantras (Verse-5) without the mind thinking of the Lord. It was a mechanical lip-chanting without touching the heart. Thus when the heart is softened by charity coupled with meditation on His Feet, it paves the way for the destruction of all Karmas and thus puts an end to the endless cycle of birth and death. As a first step the Lord's grace comes in the form of a Guru's advice (next verse).

The mind is the cause of one's bondage and liberation. A proper education of it is, therefore, necessary. Hence the instruction to the mind in this verse. The ignorant mind constantly thinks of the fleeting objects of the world taking them as something real, goes for them, gets entangled in them and in the end suffers miserably. This is *Vishaya-Chintana* (thinking of objects) which is the cause of its bondage. The Bhagavad Gita warns us of the disastrous effects of thinking of sense-objects. "Thinking of objects leads to attachment for them, from attachment is born desire, from desire arises anger, from anger delusion, from delusion loss of memory and from loss of memory destruction of discrimination, and finally with loss of discrimination the individual perishes." (Gita II-62, 63) Hence, the malady is to be cured at the root itself. The mind

should not be allowed to dwell upon objects. It is, therefore, advised to give away in charity whatever it has as its possession. But how is it to be given? Not unwillingly with a feeling of remorse or grudge (as the father of Nachiketas did, in the Katha Upanishad), but with love of God, i.e., not thinking of the object given but of God. This is called *Bhagavat-Chintana, Atma-Chintana or Brahma-Chintana*, which is an antidote to *Vishaya-Chintana*. When anything is given in charity, there should be no thought of the object given; but the Lord should be thought of. How?

God should be thought of as the giver, the thing given, the receiver, and even the act of giving, because everything is God and everything belongs to God. The one who gives and what is given are as much creations of God as the one who receives. All are limbs of the one universal being of God. The practice of and an establishment in this is "*Brahma-Karma-Samadhi*," as explained in Verse 24, Chapter IV of the Gita. "Brahman is the oblation; Brahman is the clarified butter; by Brahman is the oblation poured into the fire of Brahman; Brahman verily shall be reached by him who always sees Brahman in action." This is the fire of knowledge that burns to ashes the endless process of birth and death. Where is the possibility for an individualistic existence or Jivatva when everything is beheld as God or Brahman, as an undivided ocean of existence, of which the giver and the given are but waves which have no independent existence of their own apart from the ocean.

Karmas, says Aruangiri, are the cause of our present suffering as also for the never-ending chain of Samsara, of which our present life is but a link. He also prescribes the remedy for these, namely charity and meditation on the Lord — charity to wash away Karmas and meditation to cease from birth and death. 'Charity covereth a multitude of sins', says Lord Jesus Christ. In the Bhagavad Gite, Lord Krishna says:

"Sacrifice (*Yajna*), gift or charity (*Daana*) and also austerity (*Tapas*) are the purifiers of the wise (Gita XVIII-5).

We commit sins due to desires, greed, etc., which constrict the heart. Charity is an antidote to this malady. It expands the heart, fills it with compassion and love for the suffering. A man of charitable nature has a broad heart. He can feel for the sufferings of others. Charity, thus, renders the heart wet and soft, fit for the blossoming of the lotus of the Lord's Feet, for which the prayer was offered in the earlier verse. Thus, charity purifies and prepares the heart, and thinking of the Lord while giving anything in charity enables the planting of His Lotus Feet in that cultivated heart. Charity and meditation thus lead to liberation.

Charity is a broad term. It is not merely sharing or giving a little of one's wealth. One can be (and has to be) charitable in one's thoughts and feelings, in one's notions and attitudes. One can give one's wealth, knowledge, talents, or wisdom in charity. Wisdom-charity (*Jnana-Daana*) is considered as the highest form of charity because while the effect of other forms of charity does not last long, Jnana-Daana leads to permanent good. All charity involves, however, sacrifice of one's pleasure — it may be physical, psychological, or egoistic. Unless this element of sacrifice is involved in charity, charity loses all meaning. The different kinds of charity or sacrifice are meant to serve as a means to and a preparation for the final sacrifice of meditation on the Lord, wherein one's individuality is offered in universality. Thus, one has to give away everything one has in charity — one's wealth, one's capacities and talents, one's ego and finally oneself to God — so much so, that nothing is left behind to be called as one's own or oneself. It is a giving without a remainder. No possession is left and individuality, too, remains not. That is why the instruction is not simply to "give in charity" but also '*karavaadu*' "without concealing or holding." Nothing is to be concealed or held back. Thus, when

all one's possessions are given away in charity and with the master-stroke of meditation on God, wherein one's very individuality is offered in the universal existence of God, the bonds of Karma break and the process of Samsara comes to an end. Charity and meditation are means to shatter Karmas and transcend transmigratory life. Charity is (material) external sacrifice and meditation is (spiritual) internal sacrifice, the former leading to and preparing for the latter.

This is a practical instruction to attain that "all-ceasing and mine-losing Good," referred to in verse 2. There it is a prayer offered to God and here it is an instruction given to the mind; there the goal, here the means. How beautifully are the truths driven home by the Saint!

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VERSE-8

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அமரும்பதி கேள் அகமாம் எனுமிப்
பிமரங்கெட மெய்ப்பொருள் பேசியவா
குமரன் கிரிராச குமாரி மகன்
சமரம்பொரு தானவ நாசகனே.

Amarum pathi kel akamaam enumip— ,
Pimaram keda meyipporul pesiyavaa
Kumaran giri-raasa kumaari makan,
Samaram poru thaanava naasakane.

The dwelling body and relatives, to regard as I (and mine)
This delusion to dispel, You spoke on Reality Supreme.
O Kumara, Himavan's daughter Parvathi's Son!
O Destroyer of Asuras who rose to fight and win!

"O Lord Kumara! O Son of Himavan's (King of Himalayas) daughter! O Destroyer of the Asuras who fought against Thee! It is indeed a wonder, O Lord, that the instructions You gave me on the (nature of the) Supreme Reality removed my deluded notion which regards this body, which is the Atman's abode, as 'I' and the relatives (as 'mine')."

Commentary

Unrestrained charity has expanded the Sadhaka's heart and made him unselfish. Contemplation on (the Feet of) the Lord has strengthened his love for God and correspondingly has weakened his attachment to his family. Thus the practice of charity and contemplation for quite some time (Verse-7)

renders him fit to receive God's grace, which comes in the form of a Guru who gives him suitable instructions. Either he approaches a holy man for instructions or some holy man happens to meet him and gives advice. In either case, it happens due to God's grace, though he does not know it now. (Verses 13 and 17 will make it clear.) The Guru instructs him on the nature of Reality, that he is the Atman or Self, which instruction (temporarily) removes his deluded understanding that he is the body and that the family, wealth, etc. belong to him. This instruction, however, does not cause an actual destruction of his ignorance but only gives him an intellectual understanding that he is the Self and not the body, etc. This is the initial advice given by the Guru and it is an external one, i.e., it is a verbal instruction (*Pesudhal*).

That the grace of God has come in the form of the Guru and given him the instruction is, however, not as yet known to the aspirant; it is revealed to him only later on, in verse 13.

The Guru's *Upadesa* lifts his mind to such heights that he feels, though for the time being, he is freed from delusion. It is because of the mighty spiritual presence of the Guru and the power of his instructions, even if the Guru be God Himself. But the disciple soon reverts to his old condition, of course, with a clear knowledge of the existence and nature of higher realities, for attaining which Sadhana has to be done. This is quite evident from the case of Arjuna, who in the battlefield of Kurukshetra, was given the highest gospel, which contains all the wisdom in the universe, by no less a person than Yogeshvara Krishna Himself. It seemed to Arjuna then that all his doubts were clear, and he also declared that his ignorance was gone. But what was his condition after the Mahabharata war? He was once again the same old Arjuna! It is so because the universal vision and the wisdom were not attained as a result of Sadhana, but was temporarily "given" by the Lord, as an encouragement, by His divine power.

The Guru's initial instruction is like a huge stone dropped in a tank whose waters are completely covered by moss, which disperses the moss for a while and the water is temporarily made visible but is soon covered by the moss again. This, however, has given a knowledge of the fact of there being water beneath the moss, which was not even known before. So is the case with the Guru's powerful instruction on Reality which makes the aspirant feel, at least for the time being, that he is the Self, and not the body, etc. This would become clear from the next verse.

At the first contact, the Guru gives what is called the *Hitopadesa*, i.e., 'speaks' some words of wisdom, which gives immense solace to the disturbed mind of the aspirant. The Guru only "speaks" about the nature of Reality. He does not, at once, give actual "initiation," which is *Upadesa* in the true sense of the term, which he does after due preparation of the student (verse 20). Very appropriately, the saint uses the word "speak" (*'meipporul* ***pesudhal****'*) in this verse and in verse 11; and the word "initiate" (*'upadesam* ***unarthudhal****'*) in verse 20.

'Kumara' means "one who is of Eternal Youth," who is ever the same, who knows no change — the Absolute. Kumara, again, means one who destroys evil. Ignorance is the highest evil and is the cause of Jivatva. It is due to ignorance that one regards oneself as the body; one's wife, one's children, and one's home as real, as one's beloveds, and as belonging to oneself. The Lord destroys this illusion by putting an end to the root-cause, viz. ignorance by His upadesa about one's real nature or identity.

We have seen in the Kaappu Verse that from the Tejas that emanated from the third eye of Siva, the Avatara of Lord Skanda took place in the *Saravanappoigai* as six babies lying on six lotuses. When Parvati came, with Siva, and took the six babies, they assumed a single body with six faces and twelve

hands. He was known as Shanmukha (the six-face Lord) and is referred to in this verse as 'the Son of Parvati, daughter of Himavan'.

Later on Lord Skanda fought with the Asuras and destroyed Surapadman and his retinue. He also annihilates the demons of ignorance, lust, greed, etc., in the inner battle of the seeker. Hence, He is spoken of as 'the destroyer of Asuras'.

Arunagirinathar's addressing the Lord, in the second half of the verse, in three different aspects has a great spiritual significance. The Lord is:

1. Kumaran (the Eternal-aspect, as He ever is, i.e., the Absolute);

2. Son of Parvati (the Avatara-aspect, i.e. materialization or manifestation of the Absolute or Pure Consciousness, in the relative plane for the "good" of the world);

3. Destroyer of Asuras (the Guru-aspect, who by His upadesa destroys the Asuras of ignorance, etc. of the seeker).

He, thus, brings out the great truth that the Eternal Reality manifests itself as an Avatara and also comes as one's personal Guru; yet, it is the self-same Reality. But this is implied and not openly said here, which is clearly made explicit in Verse-13.

The Lord, who is thus the Absolute and the Guru, gave instructions, which removed his delusion. Due to ignorance, the body is mistaken as the "Self" or "I" and vice-versa; and as a consequence, the people related to it as "mine." But the body is *Jada* (inert) because it can neither know itself nor other things. It appears to be conscious on account of the Atman (consciousness) which temporarily dwells in it and animates it. Hence, the body is not the Self, but only an abode for it. But due to ignorance, the nature of which is indescribable, the Self has come to regard itself as the body, etc. This misconception is

called *Bhrama* in Sanskrit, which in the verse has been turned into "*Pimara*" to be in conformity with poetic rules. The Guru's instruction dispels this ignorance.

The first line of the verse is usually interpreted as, "…the delusion on account of which one erroneously thinks that this is my dear native place, (these are my) beloved relatives and (this is my) dear house has been destroyed."

When the mind gets purified to some extent by charity and contemplation, the Lord appears as one's Guru. The Guru is God manifesting himself in a human form. Guru and incarnations of God should not therefore be regarded as mere human personalities, which error an aspirant generally commits. Bhagavan Sri Krishna says, "Fools disregard Me, clad in human form, not knowing My higher Being as the Great Lord of beings." (Gita IX-11). The neophyte on the spiritual path cannot comprehend the highest reality, all of a sudden. The mind, in the initial stages, needs a more concrete form to perceive, adore, serve, move with and meditate upon. Hence, God comes as the Guru; and the Guru should be regarded as such. The Supreme Reality takes an Avatara and again comes in human form as one's Guru to guide the aspirant to realise God. God comes down to our level to take us to His level.

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VERSE-9

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மட்டூர்குழல் மங்கையர் மையல்வலைப்
பட்டூசல்படும் பரிசென்று ஒழிவேன்
தட்டூடறவேல் சயிலத்து எறியும்
நிட்டூர நிராகுல நிர்ப்பயனே.

Mattoor-kuzhal mangaiyar maiyal valaip-
Pattoosal padum parisenru ozhiven
Thattoodara vel sayilaththu eriyum,
Nittoora niraakula nirbhayane.

Caught up in the fragrant-tressed women's infatuation-net
And tossed about thereby — When shall I cease
from this plight?
O Lord, Who lets go the Vel to pierce the mount;
Who is Fierce and Painless, Undaunted and Great!

"O Lord, Who is Fierce, Painless, and Fearless, Who so dispatched the Vel as to pierce through the center of the Krauncha Mountain (without any obstacles)! When shall I cease from the miserable plight of tossing (of mind), being caught up in the net of infatuation for women whose tresses are adorned with nectarine flowers?"

Commentary

When the power of the instruction given by the Guru (previous verse) wanes, the old *Samskaras* or submerged desires of the mind, which are waiting to ambush the seeker, come up to the surface and trouble him. The thought or sight of

women with sweet-odour-emitting-flower-adorned tresses distracts his mind and causes vacillation. Caught up in their net of infatuation, his mind tosses like a pendulum, between the attraction for them and the magnanimous beauty of God.

Though the instruction of the Guru (verse-8) has given the aspirant an intellectual understanding that he is not the body, etc., he is not free from sensory attractions, the most annoying of which is that for women. He tries to control his senses and meditate on the Lord but his mind is tossed about between his ideal and the actual, between the might of God and the tantalising objects, between his intellectual understanding and the practical temptations in day-to-day life. This predicament is experienced by almost all the sincere seekers sometime or the other. He, therefore, takes refuge in the Lord, saying: "Oh Lord, when will I be free from this predicament."

The condition of tossing of mind is an experience known to every seeker. He has an ideal to concentrate his mind upon, an *Ishta Devata* (chosen form of God) on whom he wants to meditate. But the objects of love do not allow this; they attract his attention and the mind is drawn away from the ideal by force, as it were. With great difficulty, he tries to withdraw the mind from them and fix it on the Lord, only to find that in a moment's time it has again gone to the objects of pleasure. The swinging of the mind, thus, between its ideal (the Self/God) within and the objects of love outside, between the effort at its concentration and the pull of sense-objects is very trying. This painful plight of tossing of the mind cannot be overcome except by the grace of God, for which is the prayer in the verse.

Infatuated love (*Moha*) is compared to a net because those who get entangled in it cannot easily extricate themselves from it, even as those that got into the Krauncha Mountain were trapped into it and cannot get out of it. And again, even as the Lord's Vel alone could pierce through the mountain, only the

Lord's grace can free one from the net of *Moha*. Hence, the implied prayer: "O Lord! You dispatched the Vel on the mountain; why don't you shower your grace on me?" In every verse, the Saint addresses the Lord with appropriate epithets. So he refers to Lord Shanmukha Who, with a throw of His Vel, destroyed the Krauncha mountain, i.e., the demon who was cursed by sage Agastya to remain as a mountain till he came to be killed by the Lord (see verse-4 for details).

The Lord is 'Fierce'. He is not only fierce to His enemies in battle but He is also the scorcher of the inner enemies of His devotees, viz., lust, greed, anger, egoism, etc., which cannot be eradicated except by divine grace.

The Lord is 'Painless'. He is free from sorrow of any kind due to the absence of limitation of any kind. He is blissful — *Aanandamaya*.

The Lord is 'Fearless'. To give battle to the terrible Surapadman and other Asuras was a mere play for Him.

The aspirant invokes the special grace of the Lord saying, "O fierce One, save me," because this delusion, as the wiles of sex, is difficult to get over by ordinary human effort. No advice, no admonition will work here. It appears that the Lord has to use fierce means to rescue one from this terrible malady.

The verse is not a condemnation of women, but points out the power of inordinate love for sex that makes men suffer and directs one to resort to God for freedom from it.

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VERSE-10

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கார்மாமிசை காலன்வரில் கலபத்து
ஏர்மாமிசை வந்து எதிரப்படுவாய்
தார்மார்ப வலாரிதலாரி எனும்
சூர்மாமடியத் தொடு வேலவனே.

Kaarmaamisai kaalan varil kalapaththu,
Yermaamisai vanthu yethirap-paduvaai
Thaar-maarpa valaari thalaari enum,
Soormaa madiyath thodu velavane.

If, mounted on a black buffalo, Yama approaches me,
Appear on Thy beautiful-plumed peacock and protect me;
O Garland-Chested! O Thrower of Vel that cleaved finely
The Sura-tree — the Valan-Killer Indra's enemy!

"O Lord, Whose chest is ever adorned with victory garlands! O despatcher of the Vel so as to cleave the mango-tree-Surapadman who was the enemy of the kingdom of Indra who killed the Asura called Vala! In case (by mistake) Yama comes on his black buffalo (to take away my life), appear on Thy beautiful-plumed Divine Vehicle, Peacock, and save me."

Commentary

In addition to the infatuation for women, the Sadhaka's mind is disturbed by the possibility of death. This may be on account of his body getting emaciated due to the inner psychological tussle (verse 9) and the consequent mental unhappiness or due to his *Tapascharya* (austere way of living)

or due to advancing age. He is not afraid of death, but being a serious seeker, he does not want to die before attaining God. Remembrance of death is also a helpful factor in Sadhana, which goads the seeker to resort to the Lord with greater surrender. So, he now prays to the Lord: "If Yama comes on his black buffalo to take my life, please come riding your beautiful-plumed divine peacock and save me."

Vala was an Asura. He propitiated Lord Siva and obtained a boon from Him by which his body, on his death, should become the nine precious gems. After getting the boon, he fought a battle with Indra (the king of heaven) and defeated him. In appreciation of the Asura's valour, Indra asked him to choose a boon from him. The Asura laughed and replied, "You have been defeated and you ask me to choose a boon! Rather I will give you a boon; choose." Indra, seizing the opportunity, wanted Vala to become his sacrificial cow and when he did so, Indra killed Vala. Thus, when the Asura died, due to the boon obtained from Siva, his body became the nine gems as: 1. blood--Carbuncle; 2. teeth--Pearls; 3. hairs--Lapis Lazuli; 4. bones--Diamond; 5. bile--Emerald; 6. fat--Sardonyx; 7. flesh--Coral; 8. eyes--Sapphire; and 9. phlegm--Topaz.

For adopting an unfair means in killing Vala and for many other atrocities he committed, Indra had to undergo untold torture at the hands of Surapadman who invaded his kingdom, Indraloka, and even burnt it. Surapadman is, therefore, referred to as the enemy of Indra, the Valan-killer.

Surapadman, with his entire army, gave a heroic battle to Lord Skanda. The Lord destroyed his army, his chariot and everything, and the Asura was left all alone. Yet the ego, a personification of which he was, did not leave him! The time for his doom had come. But the Asura had performed great Tapas and had obtained the blessing of Lord Siva, who only had come in the form of Lord Skanda, though the Asura was not

aware of it. Pleased with his earlier austerities and with his heroic stand now, the Lord, out of compassion, showed Surapadman His *Visvarupa* (cosmic form). It was an extraordinary blessing for Surapadman to have a vision of the cosmic form of the Lord, beholding which he humbly bowed down to the Lord recognising His Divinity. But lo! The power of ego is so great that when the Lord withdrew His cosmic form the Asura was again up with arms to fight, forgetting the vision. Now, having been left alone, Surapadman used all his Mayaic tricks in the fight. He assumed in quick succession various forms and fought with the Lord, who destroyed them all. Finally, the Asura took the form of a mango tree. Standing in the mid-ocean as an unimaginably huge tree with roots struck deep and branches shooting up to the heavens, he shook the Earth and Heavens, causing terror even to the Devas. It seemed as if the Earth and Heaven would crumble to dust. Now, Lord Skanda dispatched His Vel which cleaved the tree into two halves and threw the Asura into the ocean. To that Lord who destroyed Surapadman with His Vel and Whose chest is ever adorned with victory-garlands, the prayer is offered, "O Lord, if Yama comes to take away my life, appear before me and save me."

This verse is an effective prayer to ward off the fear of death. Yama approaches only the worldly-minded people who are not devoted to God. Yama's form with his black buffalo is a dreadful sight while the enchanting form of the Lord with the garland-adorned chest on the beautiful peacock soothes the devotee's heart and comforts his soul. Hence, the prayer. What a beautiful contrast between the black, buffalo-riding terrible Yama and the beautiful, peacock-riding enchanting Skanda! Glory to Skanda!!

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VERSE-11

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கூகாஎன என்கிளை கூடி அழப்
போகாவகை மெய்ப்பொருள் பேசியவா
நாகாசல வேலவ நாலுகவித்
தியாகா சுரலோக சிகாமணியே.

Kookaa ena en kilai koodi azhap,
Pokaa vakai meipporul pesiyavaa
Naakaasala velava naalu kavith
Thiyaagaa suraloka sikhaamaniye.

My relatives to gather around and lament as 'koo-kaa',
Not so to die, Lo! On Truth Supreme You gave Upadesa;
O Poet-maker, of the type four! O Velayuda!
O Lord at Naagaasala! O Crest-Jewel of Devaloka!

"O Lord enshrined (on the hillock) at Naagaasala! O Velayuda! O Granter of the power to compose the four kinds of poetry! O Crest-Jewel of Devaloka! What a wonder; You gave me such instructions on the Supreme Reality that it would avert, on my passing away, the need for my relatives to gather around, lament and cry as 'koo-kaa', over my dead body!"

Commentary

Though the Guru's instructions (verse 8) gave him immediate solace, the aspirant was troubled by attractions of sense-objects and by fear of death (verses 9 and 10). In that highly disturbed condition, the seeker again approaches his Guru for help. Seeing his disturbed mental condition and

realising his predicament, the Guru again instructs him on the nature of the Supreme Reality, but this time more forcibly. He tells him that he is the Atman or Self which is indestructible and Immortal, and that he is not this perishable body. He also assures him that he will overcome his weaknesses and realise God in this birth itself. This assurance from the Guru (which is really the Lord speaking) gave him the confidence that he will not pass away like other ordinary mortals and that it will avert the need for his relatives gathering around his dead body and weep and wail over it.

Verses 8 and 11 are only verbal instructions on the nature of the Supreme Reality, God or Self (*Meipporul Pesiyavaa*). It is not actual Initiation, which he gets later (Verse-20).

'Naagaasala' is another name for Thiruchenkodu. Thiruchenkodu is a small town near Salem, in South India, and has a beautiful hillock, on the top of which is a shrine for Lord Skanda. This is one of the important places visited by Saint Arunagiri, which captivated his heart. The enchanting form of the Lord there and the charm of the temple and of that place captivated the Saint's heart so much that in one of the verses of his other work, *Kandar Alankaaram*, he says, "O, what a pity that the Four-Faced Lord Brahma has not created me with four thousand eyes to behold the beauty of the Lord of Thiruchenkodu." Arunagirinathar has dedicated many Thiruppugazh songs in praise of the Lord at this place, and had obtained a special boon from Him that, wherever he be, when he utters "Kanda" and calls the Lord, Skanda would appear. Such is the glory of the Lord of Thiruchenkodu!

Lord Murugan is considered as the Tamizh-God, the Lord who gave the Tamil language. So, He has the power to confer on one the capacity to sing poems in all the four kinds of poetry, in the Tamil language, viz., Aasu Kavi, Madhura Kavi, Chitthira Kavi, and Visthaara Kavi. Aasu Kavi: Poems

composed at once on a given subject or theme. Madhura Kavi: Poems overflowing with sweetness of music. Chitthira Kavi: Poems which can be expressed through drawings or diagrams. Visthaara Kavi: Elaborate long works of poetry (epic poems).

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VERSE-12

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செம்மான் மகளைத் திருடும் திருடன்
பெம்மான் முருகன் பிறவான் இறவான்
சும்மாஇரு சொல்லற என்றலுமே
அம்மா பொருளொன்றும் அறிந்திலனே.

Semmaan makalaith thirudum thirudan,
Pemmaan murugan piravaan iravaan
Summaa iru sollara enralume,
Ammaa porul onrum arinthilane.

The Stealer who kidnapped Valli, the red-deer-born;
That Glorious Murugan, deathless and unborn —
When He, speechless, instructed me 'Be Silent,'
What wonder! Even a single object I knew not.

"What a wonder! When Lord Murugan — the Stealer who kidnapped Valli born of (Lakshmi Devi in the form of) a red deer, the Glorious One, the Birthless and Deathless One — the moment He instructed me through silence (speechless Upadesa) to 'be silent,' Lo! I knew nothing (of the world)."

Commentary

When the four *Kumaras* (mind-born sons of Brahma) approached Lord Siva (*Dakshinamurti*) for instructions on Yoga to attain Him, the Lord explained the stages of Yoga and when the final stage of ‘Samadhi’ was to be taught, He remained in Supreme Silence, i.e., entered into ‘Samadhi’, and made them,

too, 'be Silent', i.e., enter into Samadhi. He revealed that state to them, not through any instruction. Samadhi is Supreme Silence and He gave the instruction on Samadhi (i.e., to 'be silent') by Himself being silent. This is the mystery of revelation.

The above is an example for purpose of understanding. Being the mind-born sons of Brahma, the *Kumaras* were highly pure souls, untainted by worldliness, ready for entering into Samadhi. But the seeker is still in the initial stage of Sadhana, he is not as yet fit or ready to experience the actual Samadhi. So, the Guru 'gives' him a glimpse or temporary experience of Samadhi. How did he do it? The method of doing it is somewhat like this. The Guru will ask the seeker to sit in front of him, close his eyes and think of God. He too closes his eyes, withdraws his senses and mind, and enters into Samadhi. In that state of Samadhi he becomes '*sollara*'—'without speech', which includes the stilling of all the senses and the mind. So, he goes into Samadhi which is real 'Silence' – '*sollara*'. (*Pessa Anubhuti* of verse-43). He then enters into the seeker's mind or self and induces that Samadhi in him and thus makes him 'be silent' -- '*summa iru(tthal)*'. He gives him a temporary Samadhi experience. Then *('endralum')* what happens? The seeker loses consciousness of his body, the surroundings and of the phenomenal world; he is not aware of anything -– '*porul ondrum arindhilan'*. The Guru manifests himself as the seeker's very consciousness (Guru is God Himself will be seen in the next verse) and thus 'instructs' silently. God-consciousness supervenes in Jiva-consciousness, the instructor and the instructed become one. Thus, the Guru himself going into Samadhi is '*sollara (sollal)*' (silent instruction); he entering into the seeker and making him go into a temporary state of Samadhi is the instruction to 'be silent' ('*summa irukka seithal'*). Thus the inducing of God-consciousness in the seeker is itself the speechless (*sollara*) upadesa as well as the

instruction to (*summa iru*) 'be silent'. So, this instruction to "be silent" was given '*Sollara*' (without speech). He did not 'tell' the disciple to be silent or quiet. It was not a verbal instruction, not even a thought-transference. It is a mysterious spiritual "happening" — a process of the Self by the Self, through the Self. The Lord or Guru reveals Himself as the seeker's Self. It is an act of divine grace and not attained by mere human effort. Lo! In this spiritual awareness, the Jiva is not and the world, too, ceases to be, *for the time being*.

Thus, God/Guru revealing Himself in one's heart as Supreme Silence or the Self is "speechless upadesa" (*sollara upadesam*); the simultaneous absorption of the Jiva-consciousness is to "be silent" (*summa iruththal*); and the consequent non-awareness of the world is "to know nothing" (*porul onrum aridhal illaamai*) — all which occur simultaneously — which is, in essence, the spiritual significance of the Lord's stealing Valli. Murugan went to where Valli was at mid-night and stole her when her relatives were all asleep. Even so the Guru/God enters the heart of the seeker (Jiva) and (steals it) gives Samadhi experience at dead of night, i.e., when the senses and the mind are made silent.

. Finding that, in spite of his instruction (verse-8) on the nature of Reality, the seeker was still highly disturbed (verses 9 and 10), the Guru not only gave him suitable instructions again (verse-11) but also to convince him gives, as explained above, a glimpse of that Reality (*Meipporul*) by his spiritual power -- a baffling experience of non-dual Awareness. How did he give it? Not by any verbal instruction but by silence (*Sollara*-- சொல்லற(He made him 'Be Silent' (*Summa Iru* – சும்மா இரு), by which (*endralume* -- என்றலுமே(, he exclaims (*Ammaa*! -- அம்மா!(he knew nothing of the phenomenal world, (*Porul ondrum arinthilane* — பொருள் ஒன்றும் அறிந்திலனே(-- neither his body nor anything of the objective world! But

then, what did he experience? That he himself gives out in the next verse when he returns to normal consciousness. That the Experience was given by the Lord Himself (in the form of the Guru) was also revealed to him in that state. What a wonder!

This is usual with great Masters. Sri Ramakrishna Paramahamsa, by a touch, made his disciple Vivekananda fly into an ecstasy of spiritual Awareness; in that state he saw nothing but consciousness everywhere.

But, it is not attainment of the Goal; it is not God-Realisation. It was a temporary state "given" by the Guru only to convince the seeker of the existence of higher spiritual experiences and of his supernatural powers, so as to infuse confidence into the latter's disturbed mind of his competency to lead him to God-Experience. This temporary state also gives the aspirant an insight into the nature of God and Guru, which he reveals on return to normal consciousness, in the next verse.

This verse reveals Arunagiri's extra-ordinary capacity to express the highest Truth in simple terms. Saint Thayumanavar is all admiration for Arunagiri over this capacity.

The Lord is the glorious One. His glory is beyond human understanding. He is Immortal, Birthless, and Deathless. He is not born nor does He die like us, forced by Karmas. But the Lord appears in a human form out of His free-will for the sake of His devotees, which is called an *Avatara* (descent of God for the salvation of man). God manifesting Himself in the relative realm is Avatara. It is, in the higher sense, the descent of God-consciousness for the ascent to it of the Jiva-consciousness.

In verse 6, we have already seen the birth of Valli, through the deer. Valli developed intense love for the Lord from her birth and it grew with her age. Knowing this, one day Lord Murugan went in disguise to the corn-fields where Valli was protecting the crops and tested her devotion to Him in many

ways. Being pleased with the steadfastness of her true devotion to Him, the Lord revealed His true identity and assured that He would soon come to her home and accept her in marriage. Accordingly, Valli was eagerly awaiting the Lord's coming, day and night. In the dead of night, the Lord went to her home when everyone else was fast asleep, took her away without the knowledge of anyone and made her His Divine Consort. Hence, He is referred to as the "Stealer of Valli."

Indeed, the Lord is the greatest and real stealer, as He snatches away the hearts of devotees. The stealing of Valli at midnight has a spiritual significance too. Valli is the Jivatman — the soul aspiring for communion with the Lord. When the Jiva is determined to attain the Lord and engages itself in earnest Sadhana, the Lord tests the Jiva in a variety of ways and finally gives assurance, by way of inner spiritual experience and conviction, of accepting the soul, as He did in the case of Valli. The soul now awaits the blessed moment and is ever vigilant; and the Lord appears when it is the dead of night, when all are asleep and everything is silent. When it is all night to the senses, the mind and intellect, i.e., when they cease functioning on account of their powers having been withdrawn and consumed in the fire of the Jiva's aspiration for God, God snatches away the soul — the higher spiritual consciousness takes possession of the Jiva. Herein is revealed the secret that the awakening of the higher spiritual consciousness (which is the appearance of the Lord) is possible only when the outgoing tendencies of the senses, the externalising nature of the mind and the objectifying character of the consciousness are withdrawn and centered in the heart, which is the abode of the Self.

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VERSE-13

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முருகன் தனிவேல்முனி நம்குருவென்று
அருள்கொண்டு அறியார் அறியுந் தரமோ
உருவன்று அருவன்று உளதன்று இலதன்று
இருளன்று ஒளியன்று என நின்றதுவே.

Murugan thanivel-muni nam guruvenru,
Arulkondu ariyaar ariyum tharamo
Uruvanru aruvanru ulathanru ilathanru,
Irulanru oliyanru ena ninrathuve.

('That' is) Murugan, the Peerless Vel Lord and our Preceptor —
Is this possible of being known, unless known through Grace?
Not with form, not formless; not existence, not otherwise;
Not darkness, not light; — Thus, 'That', the Absolute, was.

"That (Supreme Being or the Absolute) which was not with form, not without form; not existence, not non-existence; not darkness, not light, is (Itself) Murugan, is (Itself) the Lord with the peerless Vel, is (Itself) our Guru. — Is this capable of being known except by those who know it through (Divine) Grace? (Except those who realise this by Divine Grace, no one can know this secret).

Commentary

In the previous verse, we have seen that when the Guru (Lord) revealed Himself as Supreme Silence, the seeker 'became silent' and knew nothing of this world. But then, what did he know in that condition? Something unknown to the

mortal vision *was revealed* to him then! Hence, on return from that experience, he gives it *in the past tense*, as '*ena ninra athu*' (என நின்ற அது). He experienced the Supreme Reality, which is termed as '*Adhu*' (அது('THAT'. What was his experience of 'THAT'? It was something *indescribable* -- something which was not form and also not formless; not existence and not non-existence; not darkness and not light. That experince also revealed to him: (1) that THAT Itself is Murugan, THAT Itself is the Lord with the peerless Vel, THAT Itself is our Guru; and (2) that this is not capable of being known except by those who know It through Grace.

This was a great revelation to the seeker. He realised that the Absolute or Reality is *indescribable*; that That Itself is Murugan, the Lord with the Vel and also the Guru (holy man) who gave him instructions (*Meipporul Pesiayavar*) in verses 8 and 11; and that Divine Grace is the only means of knowing this. The revelation that God and Guru are One is not given to people of mere intellectual reasoning who grope in darkness. It is revealed only by the light of divine Grace. So, it is said: '*Arul kondu ariyaar ariyum tharamo*!' – அருள் கொண்டு அறியார் அறியுந் தரமோ.

Consequent upon this great revelation, the seeker does not anymore make a distinction between his Guru and God. He feels a total identity between them. As the Guru Gita says: "*Gurur Brahma, Gurur Vishnuh:, Gurur devo Maheshwarah:; Guruh saakshaat Param Brahma, Thasmai Sri Gurave Namah:*" -- "Guru is Brahma. Guru is Vishnu. Guru is Siva. Guru is the Supreme Brahman Itself. Prostrations to that Guru." He sees the Guru not as a human, not even merely as one spiritually evolved, but verily as God Himself. The experience naturally infuses in the seeker an unshakable conviction and confidence that his Guru will no doubt take him to the grand goal of God-Experience.

However, this experience was NOT actual God-Realisation; it was a kind of induced Samadhi 'given' to the seeker as an act of grace by the Guru for purpose of encouragement as the seeker was highly disturbed (verses 9 & 10), and also for a "limited purpose" of convincing him of his real nature and his capacity to lead him to God-Realisation. The revelation the seeker had was 'limited' in the sense that he experienced that the Absolute is Murugan, the Lord with the peerless Vel and his Guru and *that much only*; he did not experience that the Absolute was the ALL or the whole of creation as well as his own Self (Guhan) (which he will experience when he has actual God-Realisation, in Verses 44 & 51). Why was it limited? Because, this much is enough for him for the present; also as he is still in the beginning stage of Sadhana, he is not yet pure/fit enough to experience that God is everything and also his own Self. Revelations and experiences are always given in stages only, as per one's fitness or capacity to receive and experience. So, that experience (of the previous verse) was not actual God-Realisation, but a temporary one given as an act of grace. Hence he says that 'this cannot be known except by grace'. As it was not an actual God-Experience but a glimpse of it 'given', when he returned to normal consciousness and tries to recollect his experience, it is intellectual and hence is given in negative terms as, '*Uruvantru Aruvantru Ulathantru Ilathantru*', i.e. Reality is *indescribable*. But, after due initiation by the Guru (Verse-20), and purification of his mind and heart by prolonged practice (verses 21 and onwards), when he realises God in actual Samadhi (Verses 42, 43 & 44), the description of his experience of Reality as a Jivanmukta (verse-51) soaked in God-Experience is all positive as '*Uruvaai Aruvaai Ulathaai Ilathaai, etc…….*' and **is all-inclusive**, not only the Guru but anything and everything and one's own Self (Guhan).

This experience of God 'given' by the Guru as an act of grace (Verse-12) was temporary, a glimpse of Samadhi or induced Samadhi. Only *Maha-purushas*, Great Souls, Yogis and Gurus of the extraordinary type (*Brahma-nishtha Gurus*) can give such experiences to the disciples and can further safely take them through all the trials and obstacles in the path until they attain the Goal. Hence Sankaracharya says, at the very outset of his famous work "*Viveka Choodamani*": '*Durlabham trayamevaitat devaanugraha hetukam; manushyatvam, mumukshutvam, Maha-Purusha samshrayah*:' -- "Three things are difficult to get and we get them purely by God's grace; they are: (1) a human birth, (2) an intense longing for liberation or freedom from all limitations, sorrow and suffering, and (3) to come under the care, guidance and protection of a *Maha-purusha*. One who is fortunate to come under the care of a *Maha-purusha* is perfectly safe. And if one is sincere in one's longing for liberation, God Himself comes as, or sees that he meets, a *Maha-purusha* Guru.

There is one more very important thing to be noted in this verse. He says '*nam Guru*' (நம் குரு) 'our Guru'. He does not say '*yen Guru*' (என் குரு) 'my Guru', or '*un Guru*' (உன் குரு('your Guru'. By this he means every *Maha-Purusha* Guru is a manifestation of God and we should not make a distinction (inferiority or superiority) among such Gurus. Swami Sivanandaji Maharaj has written a book entitled "*Guru Tattwa*" (The Guru-Principle). He commences the book thus: "The Guru is God Himself manifesting in a personal form to guide the aspirant. Grace of God takes the form of Guru. To see the Guru is to see God. ……."

It is interesting to compare the sequence and the import of the epithets "*Murugan — Thani Vel Muni — Nam Guru,*" of his verse with "*Kumaran — Giriraasa Kumaari Magan — Samaramporu Dhaanava Naagasan,*" of verse 8. A close study

of this would suggest that what is revealed now is implied in verse 8. The fact that the Lord appeared as the Guru is not openly said in verse 8; it is only implied and has to be extracted by us — this impliedness is to suggest that it is not given to the seeker to know the fact at that stage. But in this verse, it is said in clear and explicit terms — this is to suggest that that which was a secret so far is now revealed to him.

That Reality Itself is Lord Murugan. That Itself is the Lord with the peerless Vel. That Itself is one's Guru. This truth is realised only by His Grace. It is not that Reality is one thing, Murugan is another, the Vel is yet another and one's Guru the fourth. The One Reality appears as all this.

The Absolute, which is neither with form nor without form, etc., is also Lord Murugan, is the peerless Vel, is the Guru. That means the latter three are also neither with form, etc. The real nature of the Lord, the Vel and the Guru is formless, i.e., is Pure Consciousness. But, for the devout meditator and devotee, they appear with form. They have therefore, two aspects — the physical and the purely spiritual.

The human mind, in the initial stages, due to impurities, is unable to perceive Reality as such. It requires a prop, a support, a form to concentrate itself upon. So God who is beyond all forms appears as a personal God, with various divine weapons and also appears in a human form as one's Guru.

Such an Absolute is Murugan, is the Lord with the Peerless Vel, is our Guru; and this is possible of being known only through grace. It is not said by whose grace is this known? Evidently, it is not necessary. Because the three being One only, by the grace of anyone of the three this is known. And even this truth is disclosed by that grace alone! What a wonder, indeed. This is the mysterious "Grace-Circle" --- being *revealed*

through Grace; being *known through* Grace; and being *known as* Grace; where everything is Grace and nothing but Grace.

There is no place for the intellect or understanding. That Grace is the Absolute; That is Murugan; That is the Peerless Vel Lord; That is the Guru; and That is Arunagirinatha-Guru, too, who has packed so much wisdom and even more in a single verse.

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VERSE-14

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கைவாய் கதிர்வேல் முருகன் கழல்பெற்று
உய்வாய் மனனே ஒழிவாய் ஒழிவாய்
மெய்வாய்விழி நாசியொடும் செவியாம்
ஐவாய்வழி செல்லும் அவாவினையே.

Kaivaai kathirvel murugan kazhal petru,
Uivaai manane ozhivaai ozhivaai
Meivaai vizhi naasiyodum seviyaam,
Aivaai vazhi sellum avaavinaiye.

Murugan with Vel radiant in hand — His Feet obtain
And be saved, O mind! Give up, give up soon
The desires that course through the senses four and one:
The body, mouth, eyes, nose, and ear, in addition.

"O Mind! Obtain the Lotus-Feet of Lord Murugan with the radiant Vel in His hand, and be saved (attain salvation). Give up, give up the desires that project themselves through the five avenues (sense-organs) of body (skin), mouth, eyes, nose, and ears (for the enjoyment of objects of the world)."

Commentary

When the seeker returned to normal consciousness after that grand experience given to him (verses 12 and 13), the Guru now gives him further instructions to proceed in his Sadhana to attain the Goal. “O mind! Resort to the Feet of Lord Murugan wielding the Vel, earn His Grace and be saved. (By this method) Abandon, abandon the desires that project themselves

through the five avenues (sense-organs) -- the body, mouth, eyes, nostrils and ears." The Guru wants to hint to the aspirant that the problem of attraction for women, etc. is not due to the objects themselves or the senses but due to desires in the mind, which have to be given up or sublimated by resort to the Lord. That is the only way to be saved. So he advises him to abandon the desires by resorting to the Lord's Feet. *In this verse we can see a clear* ***transition*** *from external to internal, from objects to the mind.*

Subtle and great secrets of the mind and Sadhana are revealed in this verse. Desires are not like physical objects that can be thrown away if we don't want them. They are the expression of the externalising tendency of the soul-force and they cannot be given up like that easily nor controlled by mere force or will-power. They have to be sublimated or diverted into nobler channels, which is to turn the mind inwards, towards God or the Self and thus be saved. *Resort to God is the only way to give up desires.* Hence Thiruvalluvar says: பற்றுக பற்றற்றான் பற்றினை; அப்பற்றைப் பற்றுக பற்று விடற்கு. "*Patruka pattrattraan pattrinai; appattraip pattruga pattru vidarku*" --- "Hold fast to His Feet Who has no attachments (God); do so in order to be freed from all (other) attachments ."

Desires stand in the way of our attaining Anubhuti (spiritual experience). They dissipate one's personality in various directions and destroy one's peace and happiness. Desire is the greatest obstacle in the path to liberation. Hence the exhortation to the mind to give up desires. To emphasise the necessity for it, it is repeated twice, saying, "Give up, O mind! Give up the desires that project themselves through the senses." But, how? "By taking refuge in the Lord's Feet." And that is the only way. '*Murugan kazhal petru uivaai'.* Without taking refuge in the Lord, to give up desires is impossible.

Why is it so? To know this a little probing into the very texture of desires is necessary. We have to go a little deeper and find out the reason for the existence of desires. What is a desire or why there is desire at all? A deeper analysis will disclose that desires are not of the body or senses or even the mind, which are only channels of expression of a force or energy of the soul. This force is, ultimately, of the Atman or Self that indwells the body. The *Jivatman* or the individual soul which has separated itself, as it were, from God, longs for reunion with its Source, God. This longing is called Devotion, Aspiration and *Mumukshutva* or longing for Liberation, Freedom or Bliss. Though this restless aspiration of the Jiva to reunite itself with God is genuine and praiseworthy, due to ignorance (*Avidya*) it gets misdirected outwardly through the mind and senses, towards sense-objects with the false hope of getting happiness from them. This misdirected effort of pleasure-seeking is called desire. What is required is, therefore, only a redirection, a turning within, of that energy. Just as a person who has moved away from the center and wishes to get back to it has only to turn around, trace his steps back and not stray away further, the soul-force (called desire when expressed through the senses) has to turn back from its wanderings in the sense-world and withdraw itself into the source, the Atman, which process is called sublimation of desire, Devotion to God, meditation on the Self, etc., also called Sadhana. Hence, the instruction to the mind to take refuge in the Lord and be saved, which is the only way to give up desires that project themselves through the five senses.

The reason why desires are obstacles and are to be given up is given so impliedly in the verse that it is likely to go unnoticed. Desires activate and agitate the senses, project themselves through the senses, and thus, externalise the mind and consciousness. This is the bane to spiritual seeking or attaining God. The tendency of desires to externalise the inner

personality (the Jiva) to have contact with the world outside, and thus not allow it to rest in itself, is the cause of our unhappiness. The resting of Consciousness, they say, in itself is true happiness, a glimpse of which is experienced, though negatively, by everyone, daily, in deep sleep.

In deep sleep, there are no objects, no contact with them, no sensory or mental function and yet one is so happy. One longs for sleep for the happiness and peace one enjoys then. One may have physical ailments or mental worries, but they all vanish during sleep. Sleep gives the needed happiness and comfort, peace and rest, which cannot be had from any other source. Wherefrom do these come? Internal to the body, internal to the senses, internal to the mind, is the Self or Consciousness (Atman or God) which is an embodiment of Bliss and Peace. When the mind projects itself through the senses, it goes away from this source and thus is deprived of happiness. When it returns to its source in deep sleep, it enjoys the bliss of the Self. However, in sleep there is a thin veil of ignorance preventing the merger of the mind in the Self and so one experiences the bliss negatively and on waking up returns to misery once again. But by Sadhana when one attains Samadhi or Self-Realisation, the veil is rent asunder and true happiness or bliss is experienced forever. For this purpose the mind is asked to 'Obtain' the Lord's Feet and thus be saved (*'kaivaai kadirVel Murugan kazhal petru uivaai manane.')*, when it will be able to give up desires that project through the senses.

A doubt may arise as to why should desires be given up to seek spiritual Bliss? Why not have the bliss of the Self and the gratification of the desires also? Well, it would have been wonderful had it been possible! But, unfortunately, it is not possible, for reasons explained earlier. The two cannot go together for obvious reasons. They are diametrically opposite

and cannot co-exist, just as darkness and light, or day and night cannot go together.

If we cannot have both, then can we not have fulfillment of desires and be happy? Why give up desires? No; this is also not possible because desires are insatiable and endless. This is the uniform declaration of the scriptures as also the experience of all persons. Fulfillment of desires by enjoyment aggravates desire for further enjoyment, like ghee poured into fire which flames up and wants more. There is no one whose desires have been fulfilled by enjoyment and could say that he has no more desires. Further, fulfillment of desires is attended with various defects and also sin. Thus, the desires can neither be fulfilled nor is this fulfillment desirable. If they cannot be fulfilled, can we suppress them and be free from them. No, this is impossible. Because, desire is a force or energy of the soul, as explained above, that seeks expression in one way or the other. So they cannot be suppressed for a long time. It would be like keeping a powerful spring pressed and kept under check, which would only bounce back the moment the pressure is relaxed a bit and we know that the pressure cannot always be kept exerted, due to our own weaknesses. Suppressed desires often drive people crazy and abnormal.

A force cannot be checked without being utilized in some way. If the waters of a river are harnessed by a big dam, they have to be diverted in some other channel and properly utilised, otherwise the dam will soon be washed away by the force of the water. Hence, a force or a power cannot be merely restrained without being utilised in some way. Thus, desires can neither be fulfilled finally nor suppressed nor checked for ever. They have only to be sublimated. This is done by directing the mind towards God, by prayer, Bhajans and devotion to or meditation on God; there is no other way of dealing with desires, neither fulfillment of desires is possible nor will suppression be successful.

The desires that project themselves through *all the five avenues* (of senses) are to be given up, is the instruction. Because, even if anyone sense is left uncontrolled, the energy will sneak through that and will take a heavy toll and play havoc anytime. Only when the energy is totally conserved, can it be utilised for the higher purpose of meditation on the Lord.

"O mind, obtain the Feet of the Lord and be saved; and give up all desires." The mind can either save itself by thinking of or attaining God, or ruin itself by desires for (or thinking of) objects. God-thought is, therefore, an antidote to thought of objects; the former is called *Ishwara-chintana* or *Atma-chintana* and the latter *Vishaya-chintana*; the former leads to liberation, the latter to bondage and misery. Why so? Because, the mind cannot be without thinking and also *it can think one thing only at a time.* This is a great secret of the mind to be understood and properly utilised by seekers. Either it can think of or be devoted to God and thus be saved, or think of and enjoy the objects of desire and land itself in endless misery. The mind is therefore said to be the cause of one's liberation as well as one's bondage -- *'Mana eva kaaranam manushyaanaam bandha mokshayoho:'* To wean the mind from dwelling upon objects, it has to be given a more attractive, more pleasing, and more absorbing Object — the best being God, Himself. Hence, the advice to the mind to take refuge in the Lotus-Feet of Lord Murugan, who has the shining Vel in His hand, and be saved; give up all desires that project through the senses.

In verse-7 it was said, ""O mind, why do you suffer! Now, listen to this means for attaining salvation: Without holding, give in charity; (and) meditate on the Lotus-Feet of the Lord having the sharp Vel!" And in this verse it is said, "O Mind! Obtain the Lotus-Feet of Lord Murugan with the radiant Vel in His hand, and be saved (attain salvation). Give up, give up the desires that project themselves through the five avenues." A careful study of these two verses will show that while charity

can be done thinking of the Lord or even without thinking also (though it may not lead to salvation), desires cannot be given up without first thinking of the Lord. How precisely does Arunagiri reveal great secrets of and the progressive stages in the spiritual practice!

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VERSE-15

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முருகன் குமரன் குகன்என்று மொழிந்து
உருகும் செயல்தந்து உணர்வென்று அருள்வாய்
பொருபுங்கவரும் புவியும் பரவும்
குருபுங்கவ எண்குண பஞ்சரனே.

Murugan kumaran guhan enru mozhinthu
Urukum seyal-thanthu unarvu enru arulvaai
Poru pungavarum puviyum paravum,
Guru pungava enguna panjarane.

'Murugan, Kumaran, Guhan' — Thus, to utter and melt
And have Divine Experience, when shalt Thou grant?
O Guru Supreme! Who is worshipped by the Devas devout
And the mortals alike! O Abode of Virtues Eight!

"O Guru Supreme, Who is worshipped by the battling Devas and by (men of) the world, Who is an Abode of eightfold attributes! When shalt Thou confer Thy Grace upon me so that uttering 'Murugan, Kumaran, Guhan,' my mind will melt and my heart *Feel/experience* Thy Presence!"

Commentary

After giving the seeker a glimpse of Samadhi, the Guru instructed him to save himself by obtaining the Lord's Feet and thus give up desires (verse-14). Fired up with that instruction, the seeker girds up his loins and plunged into intense Sadhana of chanting and singing the Lord's Names (Japa and Kirtan), which helped him to weaken the desires and the out-going

tendency of the mind. But he knows that mere chanting (மொழிதல்), without the mind and heart going with it, will not yield much results (verse-5). He also knows that his effort alone is not enough; it has to be augmented by Divine Grace. So he now prays to the Lord, the Supreme Guru, to confer His Grace (‘*arul*’-- அருள்) on him so that when he *chants* ‘Murugan, Kumaran, Guhan’, his mind would also *melt* (‘*urugi’* -- உருகி) and the heart *feel* (‘*unarvu*’ -- உணர்வு) His Presence within.

Resorting to the Lord and giving up desires are not two independent Sadhanas to be practised separately, one after the other. They are simultaneous, because the mind can think of one thing only at a time. If it thinks of God, it cannot think of objects (desires). To the extent the mind is turned towards God, to that extent it is turned away and weaned from desires. So, sincere and continued repetition of the Lord's Name gradually thins out the desires and eventually brings about their destruction. It is desires that harden one’s mind and heart. Thus by a dedicated practice of Japa, when the desires are weakened and destroyed, the mind automatically melts, leading to actual *feeling* or realisation of God within.

There seems to be some great significance in the sequence of the Names of the Lord as “Murugan --- Kumaran --- Guhan” and the “chanting --- mind-melting --- heart-feeling.” ‘Guhan’ means the ‘Lord Who dwells in the Heart’ and refers to the SELF, and ‘feeling’ (experience) is connected with the Heart. Thus Arunagiri seems to introduce the concept of Self or Atman into the practice. We may say, from now onwards *Antaranga Sadhana* or real internal Sadhana starts; up to this time it was *Bahiranga Sadhana* or external Sadhana.

The prayer is addressed to Lord Murugan who is worshipped both by the gods in heaven and the mortals on earth, alike. The Devas were driven out of the heavens and put to untold humiliation by the Asura Surapadman and his

brothers, with the power of extraordinary boons obtained by them from Lord Siva. Lord Skanda killed the Asuras in battle and saved the Devas from the atrocities of those Asuras and restored them back to their rightful abode, heaven. Hence, the Devas always offer devout worship to the Lord. People on earth approach the Lord for various purposes — for fulfillment of their desires, for warding off calamities, for wealth and happiness, for devotion, for attainment of God-realization, etc. — for everything they are in need of, -- all which the Lord grants. Hence, the mortals on this earth sing the Lord's praise and resort to Him for fulfillment of all their needs.

Lord Skanda imparted the secret Upadesa on *Pranava* (Omkara) to Lord Siva. He also gave Jnana-Upadesa to saint Agastya and the six sons of Paraasara Muni. Hence, the Lord is addressed as the Supreme Guru or Master.

The Lord is the abode of the eightfold attributes which, according to the Tamil scriptures, are: 1. Self-dependence, 2. Immaculate body, 3. Natural understanding, 4. Omniscience, 5. Natural freedom from attachments, 6. Unlimited grace, 7. Omnipotence, and 8. Limitless Bliss. These attributes are reducible to *Sat-Chit-Ananda*, which is Brahman, the Absolute.

The Lord's Names are filled with infinite powers, they are all-purifying. The Name is considered to be even more powerful than the Lord Himself; because while the Lord saved a few only, His Name has bestowed liberation on many. Every Divine Name is a condensed form of the cosmic vibration — a powerful harmonising vibration — which is capable of consuming discordant vibrations (thoughts) of objects. Repetition of the Lord's Name creates such a harmonious vibration in the system and the mind that it is easily attuned to the Lord, Who may be said to be a Cosmic Vibration. The mind becomes subtler and subtler by prolonged repetition so that a time comes when the mind melts itself in God, and God alone

remains. Hence the seeker prayers to the Lord to grant him the blessedness of repeating His Names as "Murugan, Kumaran, Guhan," and so repeating to melt the mind, and to experience God in his heart.

Japa to be accompanied with heart's feeling is not an easy achievement, because the mind is full of impurities and it takes quite some time for the mind and heart to be purified and to melt. But the Name of the Lord is powerful enough to bring about this effect, provided that it is done with faith and for a long time. Thus, when the Lord's Name is repeated, the heart eventually melts and further leads to inner communion with the Lord. It ends in spiritual awareness — an awareness of one's true Being or God. God-consciousness or Divine Experience is the goal of all spiritual Sadhana.

When we utter the Lord's Name, the mind should melt and the heart should feel God. It is the at-one-ment of the speech, mind, and heart — the total personality of ours — with God that can bring God-Experience. Else, this delusion of world-experience will not leave us and we will be in that condition which was touchingly portrayed in verse 5. But one should not lose faith. Continued practice of the constant utterance of the Lord's Name, with love and devotion to His Feet, will bring about the melting of the mind and Divine feeling in course of time. Patanjali Maharshi in one of his Sutras, says: *"satu dheerga-kaala nairantarya satkaaraa sevitoo dhridha bhoomihi"* -- "One gets established in one's practice when it is continued for a long time, without interruption and done with affection and total dedication."

The utterance of the Lord's Name leads to melting of the heart (which is hardened due to countless desires) and finally to the Awareness of God. Utterance of the Name, melting of the heart and God-Experience — this is the process of Bhakti Yoga; and this can be compared to the three steps of the

Vedantic Sadhana of *Vaasana-kshaya, Mano-naasa, and Tattva Jnana*.

Vaasana means subtle desire, and the mind is nothing but a bundle of Vaasanas. There is nothing to be called the mind when there are no Vaasanas, even as there is no cloth without the threads constituting it. Now, when we think of an object, a desire for it arises in the mind which is a disturbance in the mind. Just as the thought of an object is capable of creating a disturbance in the mind, which is desire; even so a thought of God is capable of setting a harmony or balance in the mind, which is destruction of desire. This destruction of desires or the process of pulling out the threads of Vaasanas from the mind is called *Vaasana-kshaya*, which is brought about by the utterance of the Divine Name in the path of Bhakti. Such is the difference between God-thought and object-thought.

Just as there is no cloth when the threads that constitute it are pulled out one by one, there is no mind when the Vaasanas that go to make it are thus, destroyed gradually. *Vaasana-kshaya*, therefore, leads to *Mano-naasa* (destruction of mind), which is the melting of mind consequent upon the utterance of the Lord's Name. When the mind is thus destroyed, the Atman, which is Self-luminous shines in its pristine splendor, even as the sun shines when the clouds that hide it are dispersed. The sun is always there and it ever shines; we do not create the sun or bring light to it; only the clouds, which are a collection of particles of water, that screen it are scattered. Similarly, when the mind, a bundle of desires, is destroyed, the Atman which ever shines in our hearts is revealed and experienced, which is *Tattva Jnana*.

Thus, *Vasana-kshaya* leads to *Mano-naasa,* and *Mano-naasa* to *Tattva Jnana* — repetition of the Lord's Name to melting of mind, and the latter to Experience of God. Such great Vedantic truths have been compressed in this verse in simple

terms. *Tattva Jnana* may be said to be termed as, "*Unarvu*" (உணர்வு) in Tamil — Awareness, Experience, or Feeling.

Repetition of the Lord's Name, melting of mind, Feeling of God --- மொழிதல், உருகுதல், உணர்தல் -- these may be said to refer to the physical, mental and heart levels, respectively, or the gross, subtle and causal (spiritual) conditions . Whether it is the path of Bhakti or Jnana, the stages to be passed are almost the same, only terminologies differ.

Japa Sadhana is, therefore, considered as a complete Sadhana in itself, by Swami Sivanandaji Maharaj. It is capable of bringing about God-realisation. Japa leads to meditation and meditation to Realisation.

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VERSE-16

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பேராசை எனும் பிணியில் பிணிபட்டு
ஓரா வினையேன் உழலத் தகுமோ
வீரா முதுசூர்பட வேல் எறியும்
சூரா சுரலோக துரந்தரனே.

Peraasai enum piniyil pinipattu
Oraa vinaiyen uzhalat thakumo
Veeraa muthusoor-pada vel eriyum,
Sooraa suraloka thurantharane.

Afflicted by the deadly disease of inordinate desires,
Is it fair that I, of deeds of non-discrimination, revolve?
O Valorous One! O Undaunted Vel-Thrower
As to destroy the age-old Sura! O Devaloka-Protector!

"O Lord Who is an embodiment of courage! O Undaunted One, Who flung the Vel as to destroy the age-old Surapadman! O You, Who took the responsibility of protecting Devaloka! Should I, of evil Karmas and non-discrimination, be revolving (in the cycle of birth and death), afflicted by the disease of inordinate desires and cravings! Is it fair, O Lord?"

Commentary

When the seeker intensifies his Sadhana and tries to melt his mind (as prayed for in Verse-15), he finds that it is not an easy job. Here we would do well to remember that the transition from one verse to another takes some time. It is not that the seeker starts putting into practice the instruction of the previous

verse and the experience or reaction mentioned in the subsequent verse comes the next day. When he continues the practice sincerely for some time (say some months or even years) then the condition stated in the next verse is experienced by the Sadhaka. Thus, when the gross desires that project themselves through the avenues of the five senses (verse 14) have been considerably checked by prolonged practice, the subtle desires in the sub-conscious mind start teasing the Sadhaka when he continues the practice and tries to melt his mind. It stirs up the hidden, latent desires and cravings buried in the subconscious mind. It is like sweeping the floor of a room kept locked for years where dust has settled like a carpet, says Swami Sivananda. The dust that is settled comes up and even blurs the sweeper's vision, not allowing him to continue sweeping. But if he wants to clean the room, he has to boldly continue somehow. Such is the condition of the sincere seeker. When he tries to melt his mind in God by intense Sadhana, he finds that his subconscious mind is full of unfulfilled desires and cravings (பேராசை(which he himself eagerly entertained in earlier lives due to lack of discriminative understanding, not knowing what was good for him. This heap of inordinate desires and cravings is a disease (பேராசை எனும் பிணி(not of the body which goes when the body dies, but of the mind which makes one revolve in the cycle of birth and death (உழலுதல்(by goading him for repeated fulfillment of those desires. So, in addition to intensification of Japa, he takes refuge in the Lord for a cure of this dreaded disease: "O Lord! I am of evil Karmas and bereft of discrimination; afflicted by the disease of cravings and inordinate desires, should I whirl (in this cycle of birth and death)? Is it fair, O Lord? Please save me." Throughout the period of Sadhana we find this cycle --- (Sadhana -- obstacles -- surrender/prayer -- grace -- overcome the obstacle) ---- in a more and more subtle form, until the Goal is reached.

We may try to understand what Arunagiri intends by '*peraasai*'– பேராசை. It is not just greed or avarice, as it is usually understood. Every experience we undergo -- big or small, good or bad, holy or unholy, desirable or undesirable, mundane or spiritual --- simultaneously leaves an impression in the sub-conscious mind. These impressions are called the *Samskaaras*. From these Samskaaras, *Vaasanas* or subtle desires arise and come to the conscious mind (which is memory, a *Vritti*) seeking repetition of those enjoyments. When thus enjoyments are repeated, they leave further impressions or Samskaaras, which thicken the already existing Samskaaras. Thus when desires, due to repeated enjoyment, get thickened and take deep root in the sub-conscious mind, they become inordinate or stubborn cravings, referred to in the verse as '*peraasai*' (பேராசை). They deprive man of his discrimination and make him a slave, and force him to take birth after birth in different species for their fulfillment (உழலுதல்). This is a disease difficult to cure.

Even the practice of the Divine Name (Japa), as prayed for in the previous verse, is difficult of achievement, because of these inordinate desires. It is no wonder that people often think it a mere waste of time to sit and chant/sing the Lord's Name. Their inordinate desires for wealth and enjoyment do not allow them to sit quietly even for a few minutes, think of the Lord and enjoy inner peace. What a power these desires have! They shake the very personality, agitate the mind and senses, and not allow man to be peaceful. Man is fooled by his desires that drive him move outward, strive for wealth and pleasures which are not lasting and which bring pain in their train. People are helplessly tossed about by their desires. Poor man! He does not know that he is a puppet moved by desires. How aptly did Arjuna ask Lord Krishna, "Impelled by what, O Lord, does man commit sin, though against his wishes, constrained, as it were, by force?" (Gita III-36 & 37). And the blessed Lord revealed

the fact, the secret of secrets, that it is this desire and this anger that are the causes of all sinful deeds, that prompt men to sinful action, much against their wishes. Desire and anger (anger is only another form of desire) are the causes of human suffering. All sins can ultimately be traced to these two violent forces. This world-show is kept up by desires.

Desires are insatiable. The more we give them, the more they want. It is like pouring ghee over fire that will burn brighter, consuming the ghee and wanting more. Every satisfaction adds strength to desire which craves for further satisfaction. And if anything stands in the way of its satisfaction, it causes anger; and we know the disastrous consequences of anger. Man loses his balance and becomes verily a beast. So much for desires!

Thus, desires lead to undesirable results, whereas the practice of the Divine Name is sweet and soothing even while being uttered, brings solace to the heart and in the end bestows salvation to the soul. Yet, the inordinate desires goad man to strive for the perishable things of the world and make him suffer throughout. He revolves, caught up in this wheel of desires — now for this and now for that. Man is nothing but a tool in the hands of desires.

Arunagirinathar traces the cause of this disease of desire to non-discrimination. In this, he sums up the whole of human life, its suffering and its cause. Human life is characterised by suffering. There is no real happiness in this embodied life. Even the so-called pleasure is considered by men of wisdom as only pain; because all pleasure, apart from being momentary and false, ends in pain, craving for further enjoyment, restlessness, anxiety and sin. What is the cause of this misery of ours? Embodiment! The state of embodied existence is the cause of our sufferings. Now, embodiment is due to Karmas. Karmas bring us into existence in this mortal world. Why do we do

Karmas? Because of love or hatred (*Raaga and dwesha*), desire or aversion, we act; and attachment is the cause of love or hatred. Attachment to certain persons and things necessarily implies aversion to other things and persons and this is due to non-discrimination or lack of proper understanding. As everything is the creation of God, as everything is a limb of the Universal Being, as there is nothing outside God, as God has become all this, as God indwells all things, as everything shall pass away—there is no reason to love certain things and hate certain others; but to do so is *Aviveka* (non-discrimination), which is the cause of all our suffering and unhappiness. Though *Ajnana* (ignorance) is the cause of *Aviveka*, for all practical purposes, we may consider non-discrimination itself as the final cause for the disease of desire, embodiment, and suffering.

'*Peraasai*' or cravings are the cause of repeated births and deaths, and so it is referred to as a disease. In fact it is the real disease. Bodily ailments and diseases are not real diseases, because they trouble us for a short while and are cured afterwards. Even mental disorders can be cured or kept in check. Even chronic or incurable diseases last only as long as the body lasts, and when the body dies, they too go with the body. They do not cause rebirth nor do they follow one in one's next birth. But these inordinate desires or cravings do not leave a person even in subsequent births; rather they are the cause of rebirths. Unfulfilled desires trouble a man throughout the present life, cause rebirth and continue to trouble him in many future births. As we have seen earlier, since desires can never be fulfilled, they cause endless births, until they are sublimated or evaporated by spiritual Sadhana coupled with Divine Grace. This sublimation is possible only through a discriminative understanding of the nature of desire, its cause and methods of sublimation (for details refer to verse 14), by taking refuge in the Lord.

Hence the seeker weeps before the Lord and appeals for His grace and mercy. To which Lord? To the Lord who killed Surapadman, an embodiment of inordinate desires, who, not being satisfied with his rulership of the whole earth for ages, conquered even the heavens and subjugated the Devas. Destroying Surapadman and his entire army was a mere play for the Lord. With a throw of the Vel the Lord vanquished Surapadman, and restored Devaloka to the Devas. Thus, the Lord is referred to as the Valorous one, as the vanquisher of the age-old Asura and protector of Devaloka.

Desires can be destroyed only by the grace of God, even as the Asura, Surapadman, could only be killed by the Sakti-Vel of Lord Murugan. Hence the seeker prays, "O Lord, You destroyed the age-old Asura with a throw of Your Vel and saved the Devas. There is a greater Asura (demon) in me, the insatiable desire. Is it fair that I should endlessly suffer at the hands of these desires, losing my discriminative power? Let Thy Vel, Thy Divine Grace, kill this persisting disease of desires, and save me." And again, "O Lord, You protected Devaloka. Can You not protect me? Is it a big job for you? Have mercy on me and save me."

We have seen in verse-5 that the essence of Maya (world-delusion or *Jagan-Maya*) is home, wealth, and women (wife), to which one gets attached. These are the *gross forms* of the three Eshanas, as 'attachment to objects', which cause so much suffering in this life, yet very difficult to give up. Their *subtle forms* as 'cravings' in the subconscious mind (*Peraasai*) which cause repeated rebirths are referred to in this verse. Their *causal condition*, as inseparable from Maya, will be explained in verse-39. This verse has direct reference to verse-39. '*Peraasai*' of this verse is what are the subtle forms of the 'three *Eshanas*' of verse-39; and '*uzhaluthal*' (revolving in repeated births and deaths) here, is '*Maavezh sananam*' in verse-39.

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VERSE-17

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யாமோதிய கல்வியும் எம்மறிவும்
தாமேபெற வேலவர் தந்ததனால்
பூமேல் மயல்போய் அறமெய்ப் புணர்வீர்
நாமேல் நடவீர் நடவீர் இனியே.

Yaam othiya kalviyum yem arivum,
Thaame pera velavar thanthathanaal
Poomel mayalpoy arameip punarveer,
Naamel nadaveer nadaveer iniye.

The learning we had and our inner understanding too,
We obtained, bestowed on us by Lord Velayudha Himself;
Therefore, let go the delusion on the world and
be firmly united with Reality,
Sing, with the tongue, sing His glories, henceforth.

"The learning we had and our knowledge were bestowed on us by Lord Velayudha Himself. Therefore, henceforth cast aside (or overcome) the delusion on the world, and be firmly united with Reality; and with the tongue ever sing His glories."

Commentary

By the time the seeker reaches this stage, it is already several years since he started the practice. During this period he had obtained and studied religious and spiritual books (*Svadhyaya*), attended Satsangas, and had instructions from his Guru. Those books as well as the wisdom obtained from them and the instructions of his Guru are, in fact, provided to him by

the Lord Himself (வேலவர் தாமே தந்தது(. We have seen that God Himself came as his Guru and instructed him (verses 8, 11, 12 & 13). 'அதனால்' -- 'Therefore': This denotes the purpose for which the wisdom was given or is to be made use of. What is that purpose? In the previous verse it was seen that *Aviveka* (non-discrimination) is the cause of all our suffering and unhappiness now as well as repeated rebirths. So, to overcome the problem of the disease of cravings and unfulfilled desires which is due to non-discrimination (verse-16), the seeker takes resort to the wisdom thus obtained from the Lord Himself. What is that wisdom? And why did He give it? '*Iniye'* (இனியே(= Henceforth, '*Poomel mayal poy*' (பூமேல் மயல் போய்) to abandon the delusion that the objects of the world (names and forms) (*Nama-rupa prapancha*) can give us lasting happiness, by developing *Viveka* or discrimination, and (அற மெய்ப் புணர்வீர்) '*Ara meip-punarveer'* -- to seek and be firmly united with or established in the Reality that is behind these objects, which is the real and uncontaminated Bliss (*Asti-bhati-priya* or *Sat-chit-ananda).* How? (நாமேல் நடவீர் நடவீர்('*Naamel Nadaveer Nadaveer*' -- By intensifying the practice of *Japa,* chanting and singing the Lord's Names and His glories as '*Murugan, Kumaran, Guhan'* (*endru mozhindhu urugudhal unardhal)* (verse-15), which will melt the heart and bring the needed 'feeling'. Difficulties or obstacles in the spiritual path are to be overcome by intensification of the practice, there is no other way. Because subtle desires trouble us, we should not get discouraged or yield to them, but boldly face them with redoubled effort. "Difficulties/obstacles are stepping stones to success," says Swami Sivananda. Eventually the mind will melt and one will be successful. All this is implied in (நாமேல் நடவீர் நடவீர்('*Naamel Nadaveer Nadaveer*' -- repeating '*Nadaveer*' twice. Intensification of *Japa* and singing will automatically lead to meditation (next verse) and save him from the disease of the cravings of the mind. Abandoning the

cravings of the mind is *Pratyahara* or self-control. This *Pratyahara* which is based on *Viveka* (discrimination or right understanding of the nature of objects) and *Vairagya* (dispassion or desirelessness) is a pre-requisite to the practice of *Dhaarana* and *Dhyana* (contemplation and meditation).

It is interesting to note, in verse-45 also the instruction is to seek Wisdom of Reality from the Lord rather than from learned men who are unwilling to part with their knowledge.

The Lord appeared as his Guru and gave him verbal instruction (*Hitopadesa*) that he is not the body but the Self (verse 7), which remained more as a theoretical understanding with him than an inner conviction. But after long practice and further instruction and experience given by the Guru (Verses 11 to 14), that understanding has now become an inner conviction, giving him strength to plod on in his practices.

The books we have studied, the teacher under whose care we have been put, the understanding we have of what we studied — all these are directly given to us or arranged by the Lord Himself. There are hundreds and hundreds of books in the world, but the books that are to be studied by us (which will be conducive to the furtherance of our knowledge already He has given us in our previous births as well as in this birth so far) are placed, as it were, in our hands by the Lord. Every seeker or devotee does not study every book. Each one gets the book he is in need of, often in a mysterious way! The Lord arranges it, though He does not easily reveal this secret to us.

Again, each one goes to a different teacher, though they may study the same book. Our understanding of a text depends on the teaching imparted by the teacher. And above all, a proper understanding of what we study is given to us (from within) by the Lord. Studying the same book and under the same teacher, each one's understanding differs. The reason is that one

understands only as much as is revealed to one by the Lord. If we have a clear understanding of the higher truths, certainly it is due to His grace. If good books come to our hands, if we get guidance from sincere and loving Gurus (who have perfect understanding of the scriptures and direct spiritual realisation) and if we have wisdom or a clear perception of Truth, no doubt it is due to His Grace. He alone makes us come across the books that we should study; it is He who brings us into contact with our Guru; and having read the books and followed the Guru's instructions, finally He it is that reveals Himself in us as Wisdom Supreme. It is the experience of seekers that truths often flash forth in their minds in meditation — truths which they have not heard from their teachers nor read from books, but truths of an altogether different source. Wherefrom do they come? God or Guru, from within reveals more secrets than what is heard or read from outside. Thus, He comes to us at every stage of our Sadhana, right from the very beginning till we reach the pinnacle of knowledge or Perfection.

The Lord comes as the book, as one's Guru, and as Wisdom. The book is a *jada* (insentient object with knowledge contained in it). It is knowledge in theory-form. Knowledge "exists" in books; it is the '*Sat*' aspect. The Guru is a sentient or conscious being, an embodiment of knowledge, in whom wisdom is "vibrant" in practical life; it is the `*Chit*' aspect. And when He reveals Himself as Wisdom in us, we become Wisdom Itself which is at once Freedom and Bliss; it is the '*Ananda*' aspect. These seem to be the progressive stages of attaining Knowledge — knowledge in the book (potential), knowledge from the teacher (vibrant), and knowledge as one's Experience (*Anubhava*) — existence of knowledge, consciousness of knowledge, and the bliss of knowledge — *Satchidananda*.

This verse also conveys a great lesson to us. It seeks to remove one's pride, whether of learning or of spiritual attainment. The learning we possess and the understanding we

have are given by the Lord; they are not ours. Therefore, there is no room for one to be proud of these. When they are not ours, when they are His, how can we be proud of them? So, this verse is also a hint to be humble by remembering the fact that what we possess is only what is given to us by God.

And, what is that understanding that the Lord has bestowed on us? It is not bookish knowledge unconnected to life, but wisdom or understanding which is life. It is practical knowledge intimately connected with life, so much so that it is to be lived every moment of our life. What is that? We should let go this delusion on this world (of *Naama* and *Rupa*) of names and forms, and steadfastly hold on to Truth (which is *Satchidananda*).

What is this delusion on the world due to? It is due to *Aviveka* or lack of proper understanding (non-discrimination). The world is constituted of *Naama* and *Rupa*, name and form. It is called *Naama-Rupa-Prapancha* (the world of names and forms, of objects). It is the perception of names and forms, and not the essence behind them, that is the cause of our delusion, -- the inability to discriminate between Reality and appearance. There is love and hatred for things because of the perception of different values in them on account of a difference in name and form. If the essence behind the names and forms were to be perceived, there would be no delusion — no love, no hatred, no preference, no like and no dislike. This can be made clear by an illustration.

If a variety of dolls, all made the of the same wood but of different forms and painted with different colours — such as an elephant, a lion, horse, cat, tiger, dog, camel, etc., — are placed before a child, it would like certain dolls and not like certain others, for the simple reason that it takes the names and forms as real, not knowing that they are all made of the same wood. It would love the dog and the cat, keep them on its lap, kiss them

and play with them. It would, on the other hand, be afraid of even touching the lion. It sees different values in the different toys. But for a matured mind, for a grown up man, they will present no difference because he has the eyes to ignore the names and forms, though he too sees them, and see the substance behind them. He would neither love the dog nor be afraid of the lion. Hence, the perception of *Naama and Rupa*, or name and form, is the cause of our delusion on this world of objects which are but the structural differences of the same substance, ultimately. Are not all gold ornaments nothing but mere gold? The different names we give them, e.g. bangle, necklace, ring, etc. are due to the difference in their shape and not their substance. The different shapes and names of gold ornaments do not exclude the existence of the substance (gold) in them, nor are they obstacles to the recognition of gold in them. Even so, the names and forms of the objects of the world are not hinderances to the perception of *Satchidananda,* their essence, in them. Thus casting aside the delusion of names and forms be rooted in the awareness of the presence of Satchidananda, is the instruction, -- hold fast to Truth, set aside the delusion -- பூமேல் மயல்போய் அறமெய்ப் புணர்வீர்.

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VERSE-18

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உதியா மரியா உணரா மறவா
விதிமால் அறியா விமலன் புதல்வா
அதிகா அநகா அபயா அமரா
வதிகாவல சூர பயங்கரனே.

Uthiyaa mariyaa unaraa maravaa,
Vithimaal ariyaa vimalan puthalvaa
Adhikaa anakaa abhayaa amaraa
Vathi kaavala soora bhayankarane.

Unborn and deathless, non-thinking and non-forgetting,
Unknowable by Brahma and Vishnu, — such Ever-Pure
Lord's offspring!
O Great One! O Sinless! O Refuge! O Protector
Of Amaravathi! O Surapadma's terrifier and terror!

"O (Spiritual) Son of the Ever-Pure Lord (Siva) Who is without birth and death (i.e., without beginning and end), Who is without thought and forgetfulness, Who is beyond the comprehension of even Brahma and Vishnu! O the Supreme, the Sinless One, the Giver of refuge, the Protector of Amaravati (Svarga or Devaloka), the terror to Surapadma!"

Commentary

This is a very unique verse in the entire work of *Kandar Anubhuti*. It is just description of the Lord and His glory. There is no prayer for help, no lamenting over one's helpless condition, no supplication, no instruction, no admonition, no

revelation of Grace, no description of spiritual experience, etc., etc. Though the verse looks simple, just descriptions of the Lords, it has deep esoteric meaning, philosophical import and spiritual significance.

In the previous verse the seeker was asked to be firmly united with (rooted in) Reality and was also given the method, viz. intensifying Japa, singing the Lord's Names, etc. This is the method of *Bhakti* or devotion. Now in this verse the method of practice according to *Jnana* or philosophical-cum-spiritual point of view is given. As we have been seeing, throughout the *Kandar Anubhuti*, Bhakti and Jnana go hand in hand.

'Firmly be united with Reality.' What is Reality and where is it to be united with? It was explained in the previous verse that *Satchidananda* is the Reality behind all objects or names and forms. That Satchidananda or Reality has two aspects, the Transcendental and the Immanent. As the Infinite, all-pervading and transcendental Reality it is called *Brahman*; and as the inner-most substance or Immanent Reality in all individuals and objects it is called the *Atman* or Self. Brahman and Atman are not two different entities, but only two viewpoints --- the Transcendental and Immanent aspects of One and the same Reality, going by two names. Thus, the Atman **is** Brahman; '*Ayam Atma Brahma'* is the *Mahavakya* declaration of the Mandukya Upanishad. This truth is brought out in this verse so dexterously by Saint Arunagiri, by describing Lord Siva with the attributes of Brahman (as birthless, decayless, etc. etc.) and Lord Skanda as His Son almost having the same attributes (Who was also described as '*Piravaan Iravaan'*, birthless and deathless, in verse-12) as "the Supreme, the Sinless One, the Giver of refuge, the Protector of Amaravati (Svarga or Devaloka), the terror to Surapadma!"

The description of the Lord (though of Siva) in the first two lines as 'birthless and deathless', etc. are also those of Brahman,

the Absolute. That Lord's son is Lord Murugan or Guhan who is also described as 'without birth and death' in verse-12. And we also know that Guhan is Siva Himself manifest in another form, for the purpose of destroying the Asuras. Thus Guhan and Siva are one. Guhan means 'the Indweller of the Heart' i.e., the Self or Atman; and Siva is Brahman. Thus, Arunagiri hints at the Mahavakya 'The Atman is Brahman -- *Ayam Atma Brahma*, which is one of the four *Mahavakyas*. Atman and Brahman are the same, they are the Immanent (individual) and Transcendental (Cosmic) aspects, respectively, of the Ultimate Reality. And meditation on the Atman or Self is the way to destroy Avidya or Ignorance, which is Surapadma. So Arunagiri refers to Guhan as '*Sura Bhayankaran'*-- terror to Surapadma, because when meditation on the Self is started in all earnestness it sends a terror-signal to Avidya (Surapadma) and creates terror in him. He is not killed immediately, hence the Lord is referred to as 'Sura Bhayankaran' and not 'Sura destroyer' as refered to in other verses. Killing of Sura or Avidya takes place after a long war, for which Sura will soon get prepared and start waging; Avidya will start creating havoc with the seeker, which we will see in the coming verses. After protracted war, Sura (*Avidya*) is killed by prolonged meditation on the Vel (*Jnana*) in Samadhi-Experience (verse-42). Thus, Arunagiri the master psychologist esoterically brings the Mahavakya '*Ayam Atma Brahma*' in this verse so imperceptibly for the purpose of meditation on the Self.

Thus, the verse points to a transition in the method of Sadhana from the religious and devotional aspect to the philosophical and spiritual side of Sadhana, i.e., meditation on the Self or Atman. A clue to real meditation is given in the verse. The first two lines describe the nature of Brahman-Atman and the last two lines indicate the method of meditation on the Self or Atman which is a terror to Avidya (Surapadman).

Thus with the Knowledge given by the Lord (previous verse) i.e., leaving the delusion regarding the world, he should be united with Reality (or the Self), the seeker commenced his meditation on the *Satchidananda* nature of the Lord, as the Self within. After a prolonged practice of meditation, he is able to fix his mind on the Self. It is pure contemplation and meditation (*Dharana and Dhyana*) on the Self or the Lord with attributes (*Saguna Dhyana*), which is sure to awaken Avidya, referred to as 'terror to Surapadma'.

God is birthless and deathless. He has neither a beginning nor an end. Everything has come from Him, is sustained in and by Him, and everything returns to or is absorbed into Him. But He, by Himself, knows no change. He does not think or forget, for there is nothing second to Him. Such is Lord Siva whose greatness is not known even to Brahma and Vishnu. There is a legend about it.

Once, Brahma and Vishnu had a debate wherein each attributed Supreme Lordship to himself, but they could not decide the matter. Finally, finding no other means, they decided to settle the issue by a fight --- He who would win was to be regarded as the Supreme. The fight began and went on for several years and there seemed to be no end to it. Now Siva, wanting to put an end to their fight, appeared before them as a huge column of Light which flabbergasted them. Curious to know what it is, they stopped their fight. Then a voice was heard, "Why do you vainly quarrel over your superiority? Lord Siva only knows your strength. He who finds either the origin (bottom) or summit of this Light is the Supreme Lord."

At once, Vishnu, assuming the form of a huge boar, went digging into the earth to find the bottom; and Brahma, taking the form of a huge swan, soared high in the skies to see the top of the Light. The more they searched, the farther was the Light seen! They were exhausted and failed in their attempts. At once

the Light appeared as Lord Siva before them, seeing Whom their ego vanished and they stood accepting Siva as the Supreme Lord. Lord Siva again disappeared and only the huge column of Light was there, which gradually condensed itself into a mountain. This is the *Arunachala* Mountain at Tiruvannamalai. This is said to have happened on a Mahasivaratri day.

Lord Siva had given boons to Surapadma and the Asuras, and so He could not kill them in that form of His; nor anyone else could kill them. Hence, Siva Himself appeared as Skanda to put an end to the Asuras. Thus, Lord Siva and Lord Skanda are one. To emphasise this it is mentioned in the verse that Lord Skanda is the spiritual son of the Ever-Pure One — Lord Siva.

Lord Skanda is described as the Great One, He is the Sinless One and He destroys the sins of His devotees. He gives refuge to those who take shelter under His feet, who think of Him with an undivided mind. Lord Skanda is the protector of Amaravati, as He protected the Devas by killing Surapadman. He protected the Devas and destroyed the Asuras — this means He protects those who have *Daivi Sampatti* or divine qualities (seekers) and destroys those who are of Asuric nature (evil tendencies). The Lord is the protector of the good and destroyer of the unrighteous.

Now, how to meditate on the Self is stated in the latter half. "The Great, the Sinless, the Fearless, the Lord of the heart, and the terror to the ego," — thus, is the Self to be meditated upon. There is nothing greater than the Self or Atman. While the mind is greater than the senses, the intellect is greater than the mind, and greater than the intellect is the Atman, there is nothing greater to it. The Self is the "Sinless Ether" in the heart, says the Maha-Narayana Upanishad. It is Fearless, and out of fear for it the other faculties in us work harmoniously. The Self

is the Lord (caretaker) of the heart (Amaravathi). The gods are the senses and just as gods dwell in heaven, whose capital is Amaravathi, the senses reside in this body whose center (or capital) is the heart. The mighty power of Skanda was a terror to Surapadman; even so meditation on the universal nature of the Self is a death-blow to individuality or Avidya. Thus is shown the way of meditation on the Self as the 'Great and Sinless, as the Fearless, as the Support of the virtues and the destroyer of the vices in the Sadhaka, as the great terror to Avidya.'

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VERSE-19

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வடிவும் தனமும் மனமும் குணமும்
குடியும் குலமும் குடிபோகியவா
அடியந்தமிலா அயில்வேல் அரசே
மிடியென்று ஒருபாவி வெளிப்படினே.

Vadivum Thanamum manamum gunamum,
Kudiyum kulamum kudipokiyavaa
Adiyanthamilaa ayilvel arase,
Midi enru oru paavi velippadine.

Beauty, wealth, (noble) mind, noble qualities,
Good lineage and family prestige — all depart, Alas!
O King of Sharp-Vel, the Beginningless and Endless One!
If ignorance, the sinner, manifests itself in anyone.

"O King (Lord) with the sharp Vel! O Beginningless and Endless One! If ignorance, the sinner, manifests in a person, O what a wonder! His (physical) beauty, his wealth, his (good) mental condition, his (noble) qualities, his (good) lineage and his family prestige — all desert him!"

Commentary

That meditation on the Self or Atman (Verse-18) continued for some time poses a threat to *Avidya* or ignorance which Arunagiri refers to, in this verse, as '*Midi*' (poverty) and '*Paavi*' (sinner). Ignorance is called sinner because it is the original sin and root-cause and impeller of every other kind of

sin, viz., *Kama, Krodha, Lobha, Moha, Mada and Matsary*a, and the cause of all our problems.

"Ignorance is the worst of all poverty," says sage Vasishtha to Rama in '*The Yoga-Vaasishtham*.' Ignorance is lodged in our hearts and is the cause of all our sorrow. We are under its dominance for ages, though normally we are not even aware of its existence and we seem to be all right though we are not. Its existence is inferred through the working of its off-shoots, viz., *Ahamkara* or self-assertive ego, *Raga-Dwesha* or likes and aversions, and *Abhinivesha* or attachment to one's body. So long as we do not disturb Avidya, it rests cozily in our hearts but when it feels a threat from a Sadhaka trying to attack it with Japa and meditation on the Self or Atman, it manifests itself from its hiding (வெளிப்படுதல்(to impede his spiritual progress. **IF and when** it manifests)வெளிப்படின்(, it affects his physical and mental health, -- causes physical illness affecting his beauty, squanders his (spiritual) wealth, his discrimination and dispassion, his noble nature and character, his family prestige and good lineage, etc. This ignorance is the **real** poverty (*Midi*) and sinner (*Paavi*). This is spiritual poverty. Arunagiri refers to this ignorance when he says '*Velippadin*')வெளிப்படின்(which means 'to manifest or come out from within', which implies the existence of that thing already in an unmanifest or dormant form. It naturally refers to Avidya which lies deep in every one as the root-cause of *Jivatva* (individuality); and **not** to material poverty because *we cannot say that poverty is unmanifest or latent in everyone,* and that it manifests itself. Poverty is said to 'afflict' people, which means it is an external condition affecting a person. Similarly, it can be removed by an external factor i.e., it can be alleviated by material help from others, but this ignorance cannot be removed except by *Jnana* or spiritual Wisdom which the Lord or Guru alone can confer. Hence is the reference in the verse to 'the

Lord holding the sharp, pointed *Vel*'. The Vel, as we know, represents Highest Wisdom.

The seeker is not a neophyte any more. He is fairly experienced and advanced in Sadhana. From the wisdom he had got from books and his Guru (verse-17), he knows that when he forged in his meditation on the Atman, Avidya has been shaken and it will try to impede his Sadhana (verse-18). So to face the impending situation he feels the need for *'initiation'* from his Guru into the proper technique of meditation on the Self which will bring about the needed *inner transformation* in him. In the act of Initiation, the Guru *actually transmits* his powers to the disciple and strengthens his spiritual power, with which he can face the situation. Hence in order to safeguard himself from the onslaught of Avidya and not succumb to it when it manifests, the seeker takes refuge in his Guru and requests for Initiation, -- this is implied in the appeal (or supplication) to the Lord as: '*adi anthamila ayil Vel arase'*, -- "O Lord with the sharp Vel! O Beginningless and Endless One!" We have seen in verse-13 that Guru and God are identical. In the next verse, the Guru gives him Initiation.

In verse 16, we have seen that Arunagirinathar traced *Aviveka* (non-discrimination) as the cause, for all practical purposes, of desires and cravings. Now, *Aviveka* having been taken care of with the dawn of *Viveka* (verse 17) and when meditation is attempted at (verse 18), the cause of Aviveka, viz., Avidya (ignorance) manifests itself. Just as in a war, the lower officers take the lead first and only finally the General makes his appearance, so is the case in this inner warfare, too.

If *Naama* and *Rupa* of the objects are obstacles for union with Satchidananda behind them, Avidya and its effects are the obstacles in one's meditation on and union with the Self within.

Poverty can be material, moral and spiritual. Material poverty is bad, but moral poverty is worse and spiritual poverty is indeed the worst. Material poverty can be removed by one's effort or by the offering of rich treasures by others. Comparatively, it is easier to overcome material poverty. Moral poverty is difficult to overcome. Great effort is necessary. It is almost a Herculean task for a moral weakling to become ethically strong. Yet, one can achieve it by determined effort. But spiritual poverty (ignorance) is almost impossible to remove. We have all been suffering from this since ages. We are born and we die with this. Avidya (ignorance) is the original sin that has taken possession of us, God knows since when! Forgetting our universal nature, limiting ourselves to a particular body, taking this fleeting world as real, loving or hating certain things, we act deludedly seeking the pleasures of senses, and suffering endlessly. What can be worse than this? This is the real poverty — not to know who we are, what is good for us and how to seek it. This spiritual poverty can be removed only by the Lord, who is an embodiment of Knowledge, which is represented by the sharp Vel. As the Vel pierced through the Asura, the Vel of wisdom has to destroy this Asura of ignorance in us. Only then there is salvation for us. In removing the spiritual poverty, other persons cannot be of any help, as with material poverty; the only way is grace of Guru or God. Hence, the prayer to the Lord, the king of the sharp-Vel!

The epithets "sinner" (*Paavi*) and "if manifest" (*Velippadin*) to "poverty" (*Midi*), clearly indicate *Avidya* (ignorance or spiritual poverty) more than mere material poverty. Avidya, as we know, is termed as "the original sin" and it is personified as sinner

Now, what is meant by "manifestation of Avidya'? We are, all of us, the products of Avidya. It is in every one of us. But, we seem to be all right so long as we do not touch it. We

are too busy and engrossed with the world outside that we never go to that level of our inner being as to touch Avidya, which lies deep within in the *Anandamaya Kosha* (causal body). But in the case of the seeker of a certain amount of advancement in his practices, who has turned away from the outer world and seeks to meditate on the Self within (as mentioned in the previous verse), ignorance which was there within, intact and undisturbed until now, tries to hiss at him. It tries to manifest itself as various negative forces and impede his progress, squandering his spiritual wealth of discrimination, dispassion, etc., and affecting his physical and mental health.

Serious spiritual Sadhana is like disturbing a cobra which is sleeping in the corner of a dark room, whose presence was not known. Then it hisses at us and tries to harm us. One may then think: why disturb it at all? Why not allow it to sleep? Well! It may look all right, but it is necessary; because that it is sleeping is no freedom from its danger. So long as it is there, the danger is imminent, and it has to be faced sometime or the other. It may wake up any time and harm us. Until it is killed, we cannot be free from the impending danger. So is the case with Avidya. So long as it is there, we are bound to this mortal existence and the consequent sufferings birth after birth. To attain *Anubhuti* or God-Realisation, to rest eternally in Peace and Bliss, Avidya has to be removed by Sadhana, sooner or later. There is no other way. Why then postpone it and continue the miserable existence! Destruction of Avidya alone can make man really happy. It is to rest in God's Omnipresence.

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VERSE-20

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அரிதாகிய மெய்ப்பொருளுக்கு அடியேன்
உரிதா உபதேசம் உணர்த்தியவா
விரிதாரண விக்ரம வேளிமையோர்
புரிதாரக நாக புரந்தரனே.

Arithaakiya meip-porulukku adiyen,
Urithaa upathesam unarththiyavaa
Viri thaarana vikrama velimaiyor,
Puri thaaraka naaga purantharane.

That Supreme Reality, most difficult to attain,
O, Thy Experience-Upadesa made this slave fit to gain!
O Great Vessel! O Beloved! O Lord of might and main!
O Pranava, longed by the Devas! O Protector of Heaven!

"O Lord, Who is like a big vessel (to cross this ocean of Samsara), Who is possessed of great valour, Who is liked by all, Who is the Supreme Pranava and the Object of longing and meditation by the Devas, Who is the protector of Devaloka! The *Upadesa* imparted by You ('Initiation' by way of inner experience) was such that it made this devotee entitled to (the Realisation of) the Supreme Reality which is (otherwise) most difficult to attain. O What a wonder!"

Commentary

Realising the gravity of the situation and the condition of the seeker (verse-19), the Guru gives him suitable Initiation. He 'initiates' the seeker into the mystical technique of meditation-

proper on the Self, which implies transference of his spiritual power that brings about an inner transformation in the seeker. By this he got the needed spiritual strength and a firm conviction that he can, not only face the threats of Avidya but also it has made him fit to achieve the Goal. He, therefore, exclaims: "What a wonder! The Initiation imparted made me competent, or entitled me, to the Realisation of the Supreme Reality which is hard to Attain!" Only Self-Realised Gurus, Yogis and Masters can do this. It does not, however, mean that by this initiation the seeker's ignorance has been destroyed or that he has realised the Truth; it only *entitled* him for That (*Uridhaa* -- உரிதாகும்படி). He has to work hard and practise intense meditation for the destruction of Avidya, for which he has now got the needed strength through the initiation.

In the act of Initiation the Guru actually 'transmits' (உணர்த்துதல்) his powers to the seeker, and the latter also actually 'feels' (உணர்தல்) the energy entering into him. Hence, in this verse, Arunagiri says '*Upadesam Unarthiyavaa',* while in verses 8 and 11 it was only *'Meipporul Pesiyavaa' i.e.,* the Guru only spoke or gave verbal instruction on the nature of Reality. There is a vast difference between the two.

Why is the Supreme Reality difficult of attainment? Reality is everywhere; It is all-pervading, the support and the substratum (substance) of everything. Yet, it is difficult to attain, for the simple reason that the mind and senses are extrovert by their nature and search for Him in the outer world of space and time, as an object. God is everywhere, but not as an object conditioned in time and space. He is *Satchidananda*, the all-pervading Essence, the Self, the Subject, and not an object. Hence, any amount of search without will not bring us near God. One is, therefore, required to do Tapas, develop virtues, withdraw the senses and the mind, aspire for God, and engage oneself in spiritual meditation — all to bring about this

inwardness of consciousness. God is the substratum or the Self of even the one who searches. Indeed, He is the real searcher, the only Knower. He is the Consciousness that seeks to know. When He is the Knower, who is to know Him? He is always the Knower, and can never become the known. It is, therefore, said that the resting of Consciousness in Itself is Yoga-Samadhi. Hence it is stated that the '*Meipporul*' or Reality is difficult of attainment. Meditation on the Reality as the Self is the way to experience Reality, into which technique the seeker was initiated by the Guru, which initiation entitled him or paved the path to the Realisation of Reality or Truth. By this initiation the mind is turned inward (*antarmukha*), freed from its externalising tendency, and it can visualise what is happening in the inner layers of the personality.

The descriptions of the Lord in the second half of the verse are variously interpreted, into the details of which we need not go. It is enough to know that the descriptions show the greatness, power and glory of the Lord, which are endless.

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VERSE-21

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கருதா மறவா நெறிகாண எனக்கு
இருதாள் வனசந்தர என்றிசைவாய்
வரதா முருகா மயில் வாகனனே
விரதா சுரசூர விபாடணனே.

Karuthaa maravaa neri kaana enakku
Iruthaal vanasam thara endrisaivaai
Varathaa murugaa mayil vaaganane,
Virathaa sura soora vipaadanane.

Non-thinking and non-forgetting State, I to attain,
Your two Foot-Lotuses to confer, When will you deign?
O Granter of boons! O Muruga! O Peacock-Rider!
O Protector! O terrible Surapadma-Cleaver!

"O Lord Muruga, the Peacock-Rider, Who art the Granter of boons, Who art avowed (to protect devotees), Who rent the Asura, Surapadma, into two halves (with Thy Vel)! When wilt Thou condescend to grant me Thine two Lotus-Feet, that I may attain (or *Experience*) that non-thinking and non-forgetting State of Mukti?"

Commentary

The Guru's initiation and the power conferred with it (Verse-20) were so powerful that the seeker is fired up with the aspiration to realise God soon. So, he intensifies his meditation and also prays to the Lord: "When will You condescend to

grant me Your two Lotus-Feet that I may *Experience* (attain) that non-thinking and non-forgetting State of Mukti?"

'கருதா மறவா நெறி' -- 'Non-thinking and non-forgetting' is the State of Moksha. Moksha is not a place or location somewhere but soul's total freedom from bondage, from all limitations; it is a state of Absolute Consciousness wherein neither thinking nor forgetfulness is possible, because the individuality is merged in God and God alone remains; and 'the granting of Feet of the Lord' by which the Tamil scriptures denote that state where "I-ness and Mine-ness are abolished" also means Moksha. The Lord's Feet are **not a means** to Moksha but Moksha Itself. In verse 18, Lord Siva (The Supreme Absolute) is referred to as '*unaraa maravaa'* -- 'உணரா மறவா' which is the same as '*Karutaa Maravaa'* -- 'கருதா மறவா' of this verse. The meditation undertaken in verse-18 which is the path of *Jnana* is fortified here with prayer which is the path of *Bhakti*. Bhakti and Jnana not only go hand in hand but also merge into one another as one advances in Sadhana.

The word '*Ner*i' (நெறி) has many meanings including 'path' 'state' 'Moksha' (முத்தி), etc. Hence attaining the state of 'non-thinking and non-forgetting' is the same as 'granting of the Lotus-Feet of the Lord', both of which mean Moksha or Liberation.

In this phenomenal world our experiences are governed by the pairs of opposite. Everything is in pairs. There is good and bad, light and darkness, ignorance and wisdom, birth and death, like and dislike, day and night, virtue and vice, thinking and forgetfulness, etc. and the list is endless. Why? Because the world is phenomenal or relative and we are conditioned beings, limited by space and time! We do not know what is unconditioned existence. But God, Moksha, Liberation, the

Absolute, Consciousness, etc., are states of Unconditioned Being where these pairs of opposites (called *dwandwas*) do not obtain, cannot exist. The prayer in this verse is for this state of Unconditioned Existence, referred to as 'The Feet', 'Moksha', and 'Non-thinking and non-forgetting State'.

The prayers for the grant of the Lotus Feet in this verse and in verse-35 are fulfilled in verse-44 wherein it is also confirmed that the Feet mean Moksha (Verses 42, 43 and 44 reveal the state of Realisation).

The Peacock-Riding Lord is the granter of boons. He confers boons on His devotees very easily, in the same measure in which they ask, if their prayer is sincere. No sincere prayer goes unanswered by the Lord. He is Lord Murugan — one possessed of undecaying beauty, eternal youth.

In his battle with the Lord, Surapadman finally took the shape of a huge Mango tree and the Lord's Vel clove it into two halves. At once, Surapadman assumed his original form. Again, the Vel cleaved him into two and threw the two parts into the sea. The mighty Vel of Lord Murugan could alone do it. He is, thus, the destroyer of the terrible Surapadman.

The seeker prays to the Lord to grant him His two Lotus Feet. The Lord's Feet mean the Lord Himself. The granting of the Feet and the attainment of Moksha (God-Consciousness) are one and the same. God is, to us, an object of worship, an object of meditation, however abstract it may be. He is something other than us, different from us, standing apart from us, to whom we offer worship or upon whom we meditate. He is an object of our worship or meditation. But the prayer is for a state different from this, wherein the Lord should become one with us, He should reveal Himself to us. He should condescend to grant His Lotus-Feet to us, to give Himself to us. God and His Feet mean the same thing.

We usually meditate on the Lord in various ways, i.e., as being seated in our heart, or standing before us, etc. But all this involves thinking, and this is not what is intended here because this kind of meditation on God is not on His essential nature, but on a form and name. Hence, this meditation does not confer on us that state. Then how do we get it? Meditation should be on God as He is, as the divisionless Reality. God is the Supreme, He is the Absolute, He is Omnipresent Existence. He should be meditated upon as such. In this meditation, the Absolute or the Omnipresence of God leaves nothing outside it; even the meditator does not exist independent of it. When, thus, the meditative consciousness in us attempts to meditate on the Lord as the all-inclusive Absolute and when this meditation becomes intense enough it, instead of being conscious of its individuality, becomes so absorbed in the consciousness of the Absolute that it gets lost in the latter which alone remains. As a wave that sinks in the ocean, trying to fathom its depth, would get dissolved and absorbed into the ocean and be the ocean itself, the two being of the same substance, so does the Jiva melt into the Absolute in its honest effort to meditate on the Lord as the divisionless Existence. When, thus, the individual is melted into the Absolute, there is no Jiva to think or forget! He alone is, in His pristine glory, as the All-Pervading Presence. No individuality is left. This is referred to as "the granting of the two Lotus-Feet," by which the Tamil scriptures denote that state where "I-ness" and "Mine-ness" are abolished. Thus, when the Lord's Feet are granted, i.e., when God manifests Himself, the individual ceases to be, i.e., "I-ness" and "Mine-ness" cease. With the ceasing of the individual, the two conditions of "non-thinking" (i.e., the waking state wherein God is forgotten) and "non-forgetting" (i.e., the state of meditation wherein God is thought of) are transcended and the Jiva rests in God, which is the state of Mukti (Liberation). Hence is the prayer for the granting of the two Foot-Lotuses (which is the path of *Bhakti* or Devotion) so as to attain the state of non-thinking and non-

forgetting (which is the path of *Jnana* or Wisdom).Thus the state attained by Bhakti is the same as that attained by Jnana; Bhakti and Jnana blend into one another. They both lead to the same Goal. "*Paraa Bhakti* and *Jnana* are one," says Swami Sivananda. This blessing, the seeker prays for from Lord Murugan, who is a quick conferrer of boons on His devotees.

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VERSE-22

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காளைக் குமரேசன் எனக் கருதித்
தாளைப் பணியத் தவம் எய்தியவா
பாளைக்குழல் வள்ளிபதம் பணியும்
வேளைச் சுரபூபதி மேருவையே.

Kaalaik kumaresan enak karuthit,
Thaalaip paniyat thavam eaithiyavaa
Paalaik kuzhal valli patham paniyum,
Velai sura-bhoopathi meruvaiye

.

To 'Feel' *Satchidananda*, -- O Lord, the Great, --
And bow to Your Feet; how did I attain to this *Tapas* great!
O Lord, Who bows to the beautiful-tressed Valli's Feet!
O Muruga! O Lord of Devaloka! O Great like the Meru Mount!

"O Lord Muruga, the Lord of Devaloka, Who is Great like the Mount Meru, Who bowed to the Feet of Valli Devi of long tresses! What a wonder, I have been blessed to attain to that state of austerity (*Tapas*) as to bow to Thy Feet '*feeling*' or regarding You as *Satchidananda*!"

Commentary

This verse has deep esoteric meaning far beyond the apparent one. To think that the Lord is Youthful and Powerful while bowing to His Feet, as the verse is usually interpreted, does not demand great *Tapas* or austerity, as even a beginner in Sadhana or any ordinary devotee can do this. But to think and

feel *Satchidananda* (undivided, all-pervading, homogeneous Consciousness-Bliss) and bow to His Feet demands dedicated and prolonged practice which is called '*Tapas*' (தவம்). It is an advanced stage of meditation that comes after a long period of practice coupled with Guru's/God's grace.

காளைக் குமரேசன் -- '*Kaalaik Kumaresan*' has a mystical and esoteric meaning. '*Kaalai*' means Eternal Youth, which means Eternal Existence or ***Sat***. '*Kumaran*' means the destroyer of evils, the world-delusion or Maya, and it refers to Knowledge or ***Chit***. '*Isan*' means the Over-Lord of everything, Supreme Power which implies Supreme Happiness or ***Ananda***. Thus '*Kaalaik Kumaresan*' means ***Sat-chit-ananda***.

We have seen earlier (in the Kappu verse) about the Incarnation or *Avatara* of Lord Skanda, that It is the Mass of Infinite Consciousness (*Jyoti Pizhambu* – சோதிப் பிழம்பு) -- that condensed Itself into a form and appeared as Murugan. To be able to '*feel*' this while bowing to the Lord is not easy. Thousands and thousands of devotees bow to the Lord daily in temples and at homes; how many of them are able to '*feel*' that they are bowing to the *Satchidananda* Mass?

The seeker continued that intense meditation and prayer of the previous verse for a long period of time, which is a great *Tapas* or austerity. It has earned him the special merit by which when he bows to the Feet (of the Lord) he could also *think and feel* that the Lord is all-pervading, a mass of *Satchidananda* (Existence-Knowledge-Bliss Absolute). It is not an easy achievement. He wonders how he could reach such a high state! Of course, it is a way of acknowledgment of the Guru's and Lord's grace.

The ability to feel *Satchidananda* behind the form of the Lord/Guru may be regarded as the first stage of the practice of '*Poomel mayal pooy* ***arameippunarveer***' -- to behold

Satchidananda behind *Naama-rupa* or names and forms. Later he will be able to feel *Satchidananda* behind **all** names and forms (*nama-rupa prapancha*).

The initiation of the Guru (verse 20) has given the disciple the proper technique of meditation on the Lord. Now, when he commenced his meditation with this technique and with a true longing to attain liberation (verse 21), due to the immediate impact of the Guru's initiation and the power transmitted by him, the aspirant is very successful in his meditation. When he continued the practice for some time, he is able to feel the Absolute (*Satchidananda*) that is behind the form that he worships or meditates upon. This gives him great joy and makes him exclaim the infinite grace of the Lord. But this experience does not last long, as *Avidya* will get stirred up and start playing its mischief, which we will see in the subsequent verses.

"To think and feel Satchidananda while bowing to the Lord's Feet," -- In this experience both *Jnana* (feeling Satchidananda) and *Bhakti* (bowing to Lord) get blended. Hence, it is regarded as a great *Tapas* and meritorious achievement.

Mount Meru is said to be the greatest mountain on earth. One cannot imagine its length or breadth, or its greatness. It is regarded as the axis of this earth. So is the Lord, beyond human understanding and description, the support of all.

When we bow to the Lord, we should think of Him not in terms of a name and form, but as Satchidananda. Our body should bow to the image or even the picture of the Lord, but the mind should be fixed on the Infinite. What-ever be (the name of) the Lord — Siva, Vishnu, Rama, Krishna, Skanda, Vinayaka, Devi, Christ, etc. — they are essentially the same — *Satchidananda*, just as whatever be the name and shape of the ornament, the substance is only gold. This fact we have to bear

in mind when we think of Him or meditate on Him or bow to Him. It is a great blessing.

'Thinking of Him as Satchidananda and bowing to His Feet' may be said to refer, respectively, to the *Svarupa-lakshana* and *Tatastha-lakshana* of God. To bow to the Feet means we take the Lord in His manifested form — whatever the form be — which is the Tatastha-lakshana. It is the relativistic aspect of God, of manifestation or Avatara, for a purpose. It is not that the Lord cannot take that form again or appear again in that form to give Darshan to His devotees. He can. But it is not His essential nature or Svarupa-lakshana. *Satchidananda* or the Absolute unconditioned Existence-Knowledge-Bliss is the Svarupa-lakshana of God. While the Tatastha-lakshana differs with every manifestation, the Svarupa-lakshana is the same for all. Hence, to bow to any form of God fixing one's mind on the Svarupa-lakshana is indeed a state of special blessedness obtained purely by long practice and Lord's grace, because while the Tatastha-lakshana can be understood by the human mind, Svarupa-lakshana can be felt or experienced in the heart only when revealed by the Lord out of His grace.

The idea is that our prayer, worship, meditation, etc. should not merely end with Tatastha-lakshana. The purpose of all these spiritual practices is to attain the Svarupa-lakshana. The former goes by the name of 'popular religion' which is practised by the vast majority of people, according to each one's religious faith and custom. It, therefore, differs from religion to religion. But the latter belongs to 'mystic religion' — to saints and sages, whether of this religion or that religion, whose experiences are the same whether they be of the East or West, ancient or modern. There is no difference of experience or opinion among them.

The religious quarrels and dogmatic bigotry arise only among the popular religions. Then, are we to dispense with the

popular religion or the different methods of worship of God? No, it is not necessary, not also desirable. It provides the initial background for the neophyte to hold his mind on to something, from where he has to go higher. The different religions and religious practices are, therefore, not to be rejected but included and transcended into the mystic religion, even as the college education does not reject, but includes and transcends what has been learnt in the high school. Because there are colleges, we do not dispense with elementary and high schools, for the latter provide the needed basic education without which the higher college education would be impossible. So is the case with the popular religions. Again, all cannot afford to go to college. But yet an high school educated man is better than an illiterate. So also, though all cannot easily attain the mystic vision of God, a man of the popular religion is better than a worldly man or non-believer, for whom there is nothing beyond the world. The latter will indulge in all lawlessness and sin, while the former will have fear of God and regard for the moral and spiritual values of life. But we should not stop with it. We should at least know that there is something higher than the popular religion which is only a pointer to the Higher. The popular religion has to lead to the mystic religion and not to religious bigotry. The Tatastha-lakshana and Svarupa-lakshana are both of God, the former to lead to the latter.

'Thinking of You as Satchidananda, one should bow to Your Feet': Thinking is an inner attitude and bowing is an external act. The right *Bhava* (attitude) should follow an action, is implied by this. To feel the Omnipresence of the Lord while we bow to His Feet is indicated here. If the right attitude is not there, mere external action becomes meaningless and often hypocritical. And here it is that religions and religious ceremonies, nay even the secular actions of an individual, become lifeless in spite of their external pomp and grandeur.

But a doubt may arise: Is it necessary for saints and holy men, who can feel the Omnipresence of God, to continue performing the external act of bowing to the Lord, or offer worship, etc.? Yes, it is necessary. Though God looks to their hearts and their inner attitude alone, yet the external action is to be performed by them because people cannot see or understand their inner attitude but can only see their actions, which they take as a mode of conduct for them to follow. People follow what the great ones or saints do. Hence, if a saint keeps quiet, only maintaining his inner feeling of the Omnipresence of God, which people cannot perceive, they will also not do any worship or prayer; nor can they entertain the proper Bhava in their heart. Thus, bereft of both the inner feeling and outer practices they will be totally lost. Hence, saints and holy men continue to perform external acts of worship, etc, for the sake of others to emulate. When people follow them and perform worship, bowing to the Lord, etc., they will get the proper inner attitude in course of time, by the Lord's grace. What a profound verse! Arunagirinathar packs so much of wisdom into a few words.

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VERSE-23

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அடியைக் குறியாது அறியாமையினால்
முடியக் கெடவோ முறையோ முறையோ
வடிவிக்ரம வேல் மகிபா குறமின்
கொடியைப் புணரும் குணபூதரனே.

Adiyaik kuriyaathu ariyaamaiyinaal,
Mudiyak kedavo muraiyo muraiyo
Vadi vikrama vel makipaa kuramin,
Kodiyaip punarum guna bhootharane.

Contemplating not on Your Feet, of nescience
Am I to perish totally; is it fair, is it justice?
O Lord with Vel, sharp and valorous! O Embracer of Huntress,
The Lightning-Creeper! O Mountain of Divine Virtues!

"O Lord with the sharp and valorous Vel! O Mountain (embodiment) of Virtues, Who embraced (married) the lightning-creeper-like Valli Devi of the hunter caste! Unable to meditate on Thy Feet, should I totally perish of ignorance! Is it fair, O Lord, is it justice?"

Commentary

What was implied in the word '*Midi*' or 'poverty' in verse-19, by which it was meant 'Ignorance', is said explicitly in this verse as '*Ariyaamai*', Ignorance.

The experience and joy of deep meditation (verses 21 and 22) do not last for a long time. He who had such deep

meditation and could '*feel*' the all-pervading *Satchidananda* while bowing to the Lord's Feet, after some time finds that he could not even think of the Lord's Feet! His mind is distracted and disturbed. Why so? That deep meditation done for a protracted period was like a powerful torch light directly focused on the 'sinner' or 'Ignorance' which was cozily resting in the core of the heart, playing all mischief through the mind and ego. That has been awakened now and threatened. It is like the sleeping cobra that has been disturbed and awakened, which will start hissing and attacking. So Avidya or ignorance shows its ugly face by taking revenge on the seeker and plays havoc with him. He is shattered. He who could meditate and bow to His Feet feeling the all-pervading presence of *Satchidananda* (Verse-22), is now unable even to think of those Feet. He is as though totally lost. So, in bewilderment he surrenders to the Lord, saying: "*Ariyaamaiyinaal Mudiyakkedavoo Muraiyoo Muraiyoo*"-- "Is it fair, O Lord! Is it fair that I am totally ruined by this 'sinner' *Ariyaamai*, Ignorance? You are the Lord with the pointed, valorous and victorious Vel! Please come to my rescue." Thus he surrenders to the Lord realising his helplessness. Such is the power of Ignorance (*Ariyaamai*)!

In the beginning of Sadhana, the problems of the seeker were external, on the physical or conscious level (verse-4 onwards). Then they became internal, were in the subtle or subconscious level (verse-14 onwards). Now they have moved to the causal or unconscious level which is the seat of *Avidya* or Ignorance, wherein are imbedded the results or fruits of *Karmas* of past lives, in the form of deep-seated *Samskaaras* or latent impressions of past deeds/experiences. When these are disturbed by deep meditation, they come to the subconscious and conscious levels and cause all problems like ill health, inability to concentrate the mind, desire to repeat those past experiences of enjoyment, etc. The problem of inability to fix the mind on the Lord's Feet of this verse is only the beginning,

because the disturbance is still in the unconscious level only. Even the agitation in the unconscious level takes away his meditation and does not even allow him to think of the Lord. Greater problems are to come when they gush forth to the subconscious and conscious levels of the mind, when they will play a greater havoc with him, which is portrayed in the subsequent verses.

A question may arise: 'Why should meditation on the Atman disturb Avidya?' To understand this we should know the constitution of our personality. We have three bodies, viz., the gross or physical body, the subtle body, and the causal body. Correspondingly we have three levels, viz., the conscious, the sub-conscious and the unconscious levels; and three states, viz., the waking, the dreaming and the dreamless deep sleep states. Each subsequent body/level/state is interior to and more pervasive than the previous one. Avidya is in the causal body, in the unconscious level, is the deep sleep state level. The Atman or Self is beyond and transcending these three bodies/levels/states and is the innermost. It is, therefore, called the 'Transcendental' or 'Fourth' state. So meditation on the Atman implies passing through or crossing Avidya and so it gets disturbed.

The Vel is sharp and valorous. It is sure in its aim. It pierced the Krauncha mountain (Asura) and killed Surapadman and his brothers. The Vel represents *Jnana* (knowledge), which alone can destroy ignorance. To take the things of the world as real and to forget the Omnipresence of the Lord, and thereby suffer, is ignorance. The Lord is an embodiment of virtues. If we meditate on Him, we will imbibe all virtuous qualities from Him and His Vel will destroy our ignorance.

The Lord embraced Valli. Valli was of divine origin but brought up by hunters — low-caste forest-dwellers. The Jiva, too, is of Divine origin but caught up in the body-mind net of

Prakriti. The Lord's embracing Valli denotes that He accepts the Jivas that meditate on Him and take refuge in Him. Also the Lord is an embodiment of virtues.

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VERSE-24

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கூர்வேல்விழி மங்கையர் கொங்கையிலே
சேர்வேன் அருள்சேரவும் எண்ணுமதோ
சூர்வேரொடு குன்று தொளைத்த நெடும்
போர்வேல புரந்தர பூபதியே.

Koor vel vizhi magaiyar kongaiyile,
Serven arul seravum ennumatho
Soor verodu kunru tholaittha nedum,
Por vela puranthara bhoopathiye.

The breasts of women with Vel-like looks piercing
I hugged; to me Your Grace will You think of showering.
O Lord Velava with the Spear, long and fighting,
That rent the Soora and mountain! O Devaloka-King!

"O Lord with the long, valorous Vel that pierced (destroyed) Surapadma with his entire clan and the (Krauncha) mountain! O Lord of Indraloka! Won't Thou think of bestowing Thy grace on me who used to avowedly hug the breasts of women with Vel-like sharp piercing looks?"

Commentary

The seeker was unable to think of the Lord's Feet due to the play of Avidya (verse 23). But, why and how does Avidya trouble him? When meditation on the Atman is continued in all seriousness, the process of internal cleansing takes place. It is like sweeping and cleaning a room that has been kept locked for

months and years. Lot of dust would lie settled on the ground. When the cleaning process is begun, the dust will rise up and cloud one's vision. It would sometimes be difficult to see where one stands. Some such thing takes place in the Sadhaka's mind now. The *Kaama-Vaasanas* and *Samskaras* — the latent impressions of earlier experiences of this and previous births, of sex in particular — lying piled up in the unconscious are stirred up and given a rude shake by deep meditation (verse-22) and they come up to the conscious level. They naturally cloud his understanding, prick his conscience, and disturb his mind. The gushing out of the *Kaama-Vaasanas* and the impact of their prick on the conscience are, at times, so strong that not only the Sadhaka is unable to think of the Lord's Feet (verse-23) but also a sense of doubt creeps into his mind as to whether he is at all fit to tread the spiritual path. This is the condition in which he finds himself now. This makes him cry out to the Lord regretting over his past wrongs and pray for expiation (forgiveness) and for the descent of His grace. Herein is the Sadhaka's secret but honest confession to the Lord, which is at once an atonement, which will also draw divine grace.

Apart from the inability to feel the omnipresence of the Lord or even fix the mind on His Feet (verse-23), the seeker’s mind is now disturbed by the memory of his past experiences of enjoyment with women. The seeker is still with his family, with duties and responsibilities. The sex instinct and memories of past enjoyments and taste for them linger till the last. They are hard to overcome with one’s own effort. Divine Grace is needed to tackle them. In order that he may not succumb to those memories and abandon his practice, he resorts to the Lord for protection and grace.

Indra was tortured by the Asura Surapadman. He fought with the Asura, but could not defeat him. Surapadman invaded and virtually burnt Indra's Kingdom (Devaloka or heaven) and made Indra a captive. So is the fire of lust for women that

tortures men, burns their hearts and enslaves them. Having failed in his attempts to defeat the Asura, Indra finally resorted to Lord Siva, surrendered himself totally to Him and invoked His grace. Siva appeared as Skanda, whose mighty Vel destroyed Surapadman and saved Indra. Even so when one, rendered helpless by repeated failures in one's effort to overcome lust, resorts to the Lord and surrenders oneself to Him, His Vel (as His Grace) comes to one's help and frees one from lust. Hence, the prayer: "O Lord, You threw Thy Vel on Surapadman and destroyed him and thus, saved Indra. Wilt thou not think of showering Thy grace on me, destroy the lustful nature in me and save me?"

The looks of women are compared to the sharp, piercing Vel. Their bewitching looks can snatch away the determination from the hearts of men of even strong will, and helplessly toss them about and make them yield to their evil ways. (This applies equally the other way round also.) And the verse suggests that the Vel of Lord Murugan is the only means of help to overcome the effects of the Vel-like piercing looks of women. One "joining" breaks another. One "Vel" frees from another. What a comparison and what a composition of words! "Thy Vel pierced Surapadman and the Krauncha mountain (Asura). Will thy grace-Vel not save me from the Vel-like piercing looks of women and their hugs?"

The rhythmic beauty and depth of meaning of the original Tamil verse can hardly be brought out in the translation.

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VERSE-25

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மெய்யேஎன வெவ்வினை வாழ்வை உகந்து
ஐயோ அடியேன் அலையத் தகுமோ
கையோ அயிலோ கழலோ முழுதும்
செய்யோய் மயிலேறிய சேவகனே.

Meiye ena vevvinai vaazhvai ukanthu
Aiyyo adiyen alayat thakumo
Kaiyyo ayilo kazhalo muzhuthum,
Seiyoy mayileriya sevakane.

Taking life, of Karmas relentless, as real and rejoicing,
Am I to run about and whirl? Is it becoming?
Not only Thy hands, Vel and Feet, but Thy whole Being
Is red in colour; O Valorous Lord, Peacock-Riding!

"O Peacock-Riding Lord, Whose not only Hands, Vel, and Feet are, but Whose whole Being is, red in colour i.e., Perfection personified! Taking this (phenomenal) life, of Karmas inexorable, as real and rejoicing in it, should I, Thy devotee, aimlessly run about? Is it fair, O Lord?"

Commentary

The real power of the Karmas is seen in this verse. Though the seeker is fairly advanced, has the guidance of his Guru and is trying to abandon the notions of the reality of the phenomenal world and duties, the Karmas are so powerful that

they make him take delight in those very things which he is trying to reject, as if they were very real!

Verses 23, 24 and 25 depict the deplorable condition of the seeker when assailed by Avidya. In these situations, many seekers who do not have a proper Guru to guide them or are heedless, abandon their practices and take to normal life. But the undaunted ones, with the help of their Guru's grace, try to plod on and free themselves from the shackles of Karmas. The seeker is now in that condition. He intensely feels the need to free himself from the bonds of the relentless *Karmas* which have brought the present state of life, wherein out of necessity he has to take delight (as though it is real) in doing the daily round of duties, running here and there {(such as running about between home, office, market, doing other errands, etc. (அலைதல்)}, to fulfill the responsibilities to the family, which deprive him of his precious time and energy being concentrated on the (முழுதும் செய்யோய்(All-Perfect and All-Enchanting Lord. So he laments over his lot and appeals to the Lord: "Should I suffer like this?"

In the process of meditation, the Sadhaka's effort is to transcend or forget the world. But when the inner purification goes on and the *Vaasanas* and *Samskaras* come up to the conscious level, they revive his memory of past experiences and thus, lend reality to the world or life that he tries to forget. This is another phase of the inner tussle of the Sadhaka, similar to the one of the last verse. Hence, his cry and resort to the All-Perfect Lord (முழுதும் செய்யோய்), which means a determined and resolute effort at more intense meditation on the Self. He has clear knowledge that the world of names and forms is unreal and has to be renounced by fixing his mind on the Self or Atman which is Satchidananda (Verse-17). And he has been initiated into the proper technique of meditation by his Guru (verse 20). Hence he is not to be easily led astray by these

passing obstacles, which are due to the relentless working of the inexorable law of Karma. It is so powerful that it would seem as though it will overpower his Sadhana-power and Guru's grace. But, it cannot. It will soon exhaust itself and he will come out victorious. He knows that the remedy for all obstacles in meditation is meditation itself — more intense and prolonged. After all, positive will overcome the negative; divine grace will endure, while Karmas shall come to an end.

Thus, with the confession to the Lord and invoking of His grace (verse 24), the Sadhaka, even in the midst of this tempest of *Vaasanas* and *Samskaras* (Karmas), now forges forth into his meditation on the Self, or the Lord, as a mass of Perfection.

The Lord's hands are red. They give protection to His devotees. The Lord's hands are "*Abhaya-Karangal*," that is, the hands that grant fearlessness to devotees and confer blessings on all. His hands have become red because of endless giving and giving. The Vel, which is Lord Skanda's principal divine weapon, is also red, because it pierced through the Asura Surapadman, and is tainted with his blood. His Feet are red due to the constant worship by the Devas and also by devotees.

His hands give protection. His Vel grants wisdom. His Feet confer Moksha. Not only are the Lord's hands, Vel, and Feet red, but Lord Murugan Himself is red, in His whole Being. Red is indicative of uprightness, greatness, beauty, etc., that is, Perfection. "O Lord, Thou art Perfect! Release me from this imperfect world and show me a perfect way to Perfection," seems to be the prayer of the seeker.

மெய்யே என வெவ்வினை வாழ்வை உகந்து -- '*Meiye yena Vevvinai vaazhvai ugandhu*' -- "Taking this (phenomenal) life, of Karmas inexorable, as real and rejoicing in it.": Life on earth is imperfect. This phenomenal life is governed by the inexorable law of Karma, i.e., the law of cause and effect.

Everything here is determined by this law. Things in the world change, the bodies come into being and perish, and people are brought together and separated — all due to the working of this law. Inspite of knowing this, we take these passing things as real and try to find happiness in them. The result is suffering. Why do we do so? This again is due the working of this relentless Law of Karma.

It would be interesting to know what this Law of Karma is and how it works. It is the Law of Cause and Effect. It is one of the laws of Nature, like the Law of Gravitation, Law of Cohesion, etc. These laws are not man-made nor do they belong to any religion. They are cosmic laws, of Nature, made by God or the Cosmic Being at the beginning of creation, and so they operate equally on all, whether we accept them or not, believe in them or not, want them or not.

The universe or the cosmos or Nature is a balance of forces, which always maintains it. If anything/anyone disturbs its balance, it tries to restore it, and in so doing *it redounds* upon the one who disturbs it, like a rubber ball thrown against a wall that comes back to the thrower. It is this reaction from the cosmos in its effort to come back to its harmony that is the working of the law of Karma.

Every individual is an ego-center, as it were, that disturbs the cosmic balance by its actions and thoughts which are mostly desire-prompted and selfish. So our actions (including our thoughts) produce a reaction from the cosmos, according to their intensity and motive. "As you sow, so do you reap." Good results follow good actions and bad from bad. This law of Karma is referred to as unrelenting; it has no friends or enemies, and it is very scientific in its working — not even a single Karma, however small it may be, can go unrewarded. There is no such thing as striking a balance. If one does, say, 10 good karmas and 8 bad, the latter 8 cannot be cancelled with 8

of the former and only the balance of 2 good enjoyed. No. All the 10 good and all the 8 bad have to be individually rewarded according to each one's intensity. Hence, it is called inexorable. This is the reason why we come across good people suffering, though they might not have done any wrong in this life, which suffering is due to their past wrongs. It is also not uncommon to see evil-doers enjoying in this life, for similar reasons. Indeed, the law of Karma is terrible and mysterious. But it equally assures one's future good for the good deeds done now and vice-versa.

Every action of ours produces a reaction. The actions that we perform are called Karmas; the reactions or the fruits that follow from them (*Karma-phala)* are also called Karmas. We have taken this body as a result of our past Karmas which also continue to govern our life now. Again, the actions that we perform now produce reactions and lead to further births. Thus, Karmas are both the cause and effect of our life, and we are totally governed by the law. This seems to be an endless process. Naturally, the question arises as to how to get freed from this. Is there no way out? Yes, there is. The solution is to resort to the Perfect Being — to God, who is All-Perfect. We are subject to the law of Karma because we regard ourselves as the doers of actions and with expectation of their fruits. But if we take refuge in God, in whom the law does not operate, we will be freed from that law.

This body has been given to us as a result of our past actions. Our (pleasant and painful) experiences in this span of life are already determined by the effects of our past actions that have caused this life. Hence, all our experiences will pass away and come to an end one day, when the force of the momentum that caused them ceases. Therefore, undue importance is not to be attached to this earthly life. Neither are we to be overjoyed when desirable experiences come, nor are we to be depressed and sunken when undesirable ones present themselves, as both

will pass away. Life is transitory (verse-27). Such a life should not be taken as real, as the all. God is the great Reality, the All-Perfect, "red" in His entire being. He is to be sought always, whatever be one's condition. Otherwise, one is easily tossed about by every little happening in life, like a dry leaf that is thrown hither and thither by the wind. But he who has resorted to God remains unaffected like a mountain, which is not shaken a bit even by the strongest wind. One who holds fast to God, that is, whose mind is fixed on God, is not easily shaken by the passing events in life. He knows that these experiences come and go, but do not touch his inner, real personality. But the man of the world, for whom the things of world are the only reality, to whom nothing higher exists, is easily carried away by every little incident in life. If his bank balance fails, he collapses. If his dear ones depart, his life becomes sapless. These come as shocking incidents that break his weak heart. But he who is devoted to God knows that the things of the world are subject to change and that they will leave him any moment, and so he is not affected by them. Only he who takes them as permanent realities gets a rude shock when they are separated from him, which is bound to happen because of the working of the law. Persons and things are brought together and separated by their Karmas, as logs of wood in a river are joined or separated by the wind. The law of Karma is no respecter of our joys and sorrows. It works relentlessly. Hence, knowing the transitory nature of things of this phenomenal life, one should take refuge in that which is "red," i.e., perfect and permanent (God), so that one may not be tossed about by the passing events of this illusory life. Thus the seeker, though he is tormented by his deplorable condition due to the working of Karmas, resorts to the All-Perfect Lord and continues his meditation on the Self.

Our life is governed by the relentless law of Karma which is merciless. But the law-giver (the Lord) is full of mercy. So long as one does not take refuge in the Lord, the law of Karma

works inexorably. Once, we surrender ourselves to God, the law loses its hold on us. As long as we take this world as real and ourselves as the doers of deeds and act with the expectation of their fruits, we cannot escape the working of the law. The idea of agency or doership and enjoyership is what makes us subject to the working of the law and is the cause of our bondage. But those who take refuge in the Lord and act as His instruments, for His pleasure, in the participation of His will, without expectation of rewards, as worship of the Lord, as offerings unto Him go beyond the working of this hard law. Hence, resort to the merciful Lord is the only way to be freed from the merciless law of Karma. The law can be overcome only by surrender to the Law-Giver; the Lord's Maya is transcended only by His grace, as Bhagavan Sri Krishna says: "Verily, this divine illusion of Mine (Maya), made up of the (three) qualities (of Nature), is difficult to cross over; those who take refuge in Me alone cross over this illusion." (Gita VII-14). The child gets rest in the play of ‘hide and seek’, only when it returns to the granny who initiated and keeps the play going. "O Lord, Thou art the Perfect One. How long should I be mercilessly kicked about by this inexorable Karmas? How long will I rejoice in this world, taking it as real? Grant me proper understanding (Viveka). Grant me love for thy Feet. Save me, O Perfect One, O Peacock-Rider, O Glorious One, O Valorous One! How can Thou be called Perfect, when I, thy slave, am tormented by this illusory life? Does my suffering befit Thine All-Perfectness? No. Hence, save me," is the seeker’s appeal to the Lord.

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VERSE-26

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ஆதாரம் இலேன் அருளைப் பெறவே
நீதான் ஒருசற்றும் நினைந்திலையே
வேதாகம ஞான விநோத மனோ
தீதா சுரலோக சகாமணியே.

Aadhaaram ilen arulaip perave,
Neethaan oru satrum ninainthilaiye
Vetha-agama jnaana vinotha mano
Theethaa sura loka sikhaa maniye.

I, who am supportless, Your grace to get
You too have bestowed not a moment's thought!
Vedas, Agamas, Knowledge, Actions and the Mind even, —
Transcending these art Thou, O Crest-Jewel of Heaven!

"O Lord! The Crest-Jewel of Devaloka, Who art beyond (the reach of) the Vedas, Agamas, (intellectual) knowledge, (physical) activity and mind! O Lord, I have no support (except You)! (Yet) You have not thought, even for a moment, of my obtaining Your grace. (What a pity!)

Commentary

After receiving Initiation from his Guru (verse-20), the seeker had the wonderful experience of feeling *Satchidananda* while bowing to the Lord (verse-22). But after that the seeker has passed through the conditions of onslaught of Avidya (verses 23, 24 and 25), which should have taken quite a while.

It may be many months or even a couple of years, because dealing with Avidya which is the causal body is difficult and does take a long time to battle with the piled up *Samskaras* and *Vaasanas*. Yet, help does not seem to come from the Lord in spite of the seeker's repeated surrender and prayer to Him for grace. Assailed by Avidya from inside he is unable to concentrate his mind on the Lord, though he continues his practice tenaciously; and in his outer life also, the responsibilities of the family life make him run hither and thither (verse-25) which distract his spiritual practices. From inside and outside he has only problems, but no help or support. He is utterly 'support-less' (ஆதாரமிலேன்(. So he impatiently appeals to the Lord for His Grace, saying: "O Lord, I have been suffering and praying to You for help. I have no other support except You. But You have not given even a moment's thought to bestow your Grace upon me. How long can this continue?" And, in order to support his claim for His grace, he praises the Lord, saying: "O Lord, the Crest-Jewel of Devaloka! Thou art beyond (the reach of) the Vedas, Agamas, (intellectual) knowledge, (physical) activity and mind!" In order that the Lord may not say that He is not showering His Grace because the seeker is not thinking of Him, he justifies himself by saying: "How can I think of You Who are beyond (the reach of) the mind)மனோதீதா(?"

It is interesting to see how the Karmas (*Prarabdha*) and divine Grace work side by side. Karmas are indeed very powerful and sometimes Grace does not seem to stand before it. But there is a great secret that we should know. While the Karmas may be powerful even to the extent of defying Grace *temporarily*, they have a beginning and an end. So, when the momentum that caused the Karmas gets exhausted, Karmas are finished. But divine Grace is perennial, grows slowly and steadily, but never getting exhausted, until it fructifies into Samadhi or God-Experience. So, great patience is needed of

Sadhakas in their practices. Sooner or later, the Karmas will get finished and divine Grace will stand supreme.

Thus, the seeker who is experiencing the power of Karmas also knows the power of his Guru's Initiation and Grace which will eventually save him.

The Vedas are four and the Siva Agamas are twenty-eight. They glorify God and try to point out the way of attaining Him. They contain the highest wisdom, the mystic revelations of saints and sages. But, they also conclude by saying that He is beyond their reach, because they can only show the way and not give God-Experience. God has to be *experienced* by oneself. Our intellectual understanding, mental processes and bodily activities cannot take us near God. He is beyond the reach of anything known to us in our present condition of knowing. He stands transcending everything and so He is not attainable by any of these means. "Therefore, O Lord! I have now no support; Thou art my only support. But Thou art beyond the reach of the mind, etc. Therefore, Thou should think of me now, though for a moment, and that would be enough to have Thy grace and divine experience," — is the appeal of the seeker.

In spite of the Sadhaka's greater and greater resort to the Lord (viz. meditation on the Self) he feels 'supportless' because of the power of the Karmas. Also, he has not gained a substantial footing in Reality (God), though he is fairly advanced in Sadhana. This is a very critical condition wherein he is in need of the divine support more than at other times. He feels that a pull from the "Above" is absolutely necessary here. This seems to be a preparation for the transitional state in meditation, wherein the Jiva-consciousness tries to exceed itself, i.e., go beyond itself and touch universal consciousness.

There is a greater self-surrender and dependence on the Lord, i.e., an effort at a more intense meditation on the part of the Jiva to attune itself to the Universal.

It would be interesting to note that:

In Verse-23 (*Adiyaikkuriyaadhu*) the problem is in the causal body (*Ariyaamai* or Ignorance) or the unconscious level; hence, he is only unable to meditate on the Lord's Feet.

In Verse-24 (*Koorvel vizhi Mangaiyar*) from the causal body the problem has come to the subtle body or sub-conscious level; so that, not only he is unable to meditate on the Lord's Feet but also the subtle impressions (*Kaama-Samskaaraas*) of past enjoyments, which are imbedded in the sub-conscious, get awakened and disturb his mind.

In Verse-25 (*Meiye ena*) the problem has come to the physical level; not only the inability to meditate and the disturbance from the memories of past enjoyments, but also the need to take interest in the daily mundane activities against his wishes -- all which take away his time and energy, and not allow him to think of God at all.

In Verse-26 (*Aadhaaramilen*) he who is thus disturbed in all the three levels of his being, finds himself utterly supportless. In such a condition, there is no other support except the Lord's grace, which condition is aptly portrayed in this verse as "*Aadhaaramilen*".

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VERSE-27

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மின்னேநிகர் வாழ்வை விரும்பிய யான்
என்னே விதியின் பயன் இங்கிதுவோ
பொன்னே மணியே பொருளே அருளே
மன்னே மயிலேறிய வானவனே.

Minne nikarvaazhvai virumbiya yaan,
Enne vithiyin payan ingu ithuvo
Ponne maniye porule arule,
Manne mayil eriya vaanavane.

Lo, lightning-like transitory life I eagerly covet!
Why so? Is it so here due to my bad fate?
O Gold! O Gem! O Verity! O Grace-Embodiment!
O King! O Peacock-Riding Providence Great!

"O Lord, Who art rare like Gold, Who shines like a Gem, Who art the Supreme Reality, Who art an embodiment of Grace and Compassion, the (Eternal) King, the Great One that rides on the Peacock! How is it that I coveted this lightning-flash-like transitory life? Is it so due to the fruit of my fate?"

Commentary

"Why did I cherish and choose this lightning-like transient life? Is it due to the fruit of my fate or past Karmas!" wonders the seeker. Our present life is what we have wished and asked for. It is a product of our past Karmas (**விதியின் பயன்**(. The seeker realises the power of '*Vidhi*' or fate or past Karmas

(வெவ்வினை(of verse-25, having had the horrible experience of the onslaught of Karmas for such a long time (verses 23 to 26). In the past lives, due to *Aviveka* or lack of proper understanding of the nature of things, he ran after the mirage of objects to quench the thirst of sense-enjoyment, pleasure-seeking, wealth, etc. All those desires and efforts to fulfill them formed the thick layer of Avidya (*Samskaras*) which have harassed him so far. But now he has fully realised the cause of his suffering and the *Samskaras* are also on the verge of getting exhausted. Just as when the thick layer of dark clouds covering the sun, making it appear as though it were night, start dispersing, the sun becomes slowly visible, so also when the past Karmas that troubled him for such a long time are getting finished, he starts having slight glimpses of the might and glory of the Lord, in his meditation. Soon the Lord (*Jnana-Surya*) will shine in His full glory. So, he exclaims: "O Lord, how mysterious is the power of '*vidhi*' or my fate (Karmas) that made me cherish and choose this lightning-like transient life, and take interest in things mundane even against my not wanting to do so! Anyhow they are coming to an end now by Your grace. Glory be to Thee Who art Gold, Gem, the Supreme Reality and Mass of Grace!"

'*Minne nigar vaazhvu*' -- 'Life is evanescent like the lightning'. In his past lives, the seeker did not have *Viveka* or proper understanding of the nature of the world, which he now sees clearly. This life is transitory. Everything here is passing. Change is the character of this world. Like a lightning-flash, life comes and goes. Ere it is perceived, the lightning vanishes; so uncertain is life, too. Now it is, and now it disappears. Even this short, uncertain life is full of pain, suffering and anxiety at every stage. Persons and things are seen to pass away, daily, before our very eyes, yet we cling to them in the vain hope of getting enjoyment from them. This body of ours is itself subject to diseases, decay and death; and the things of the world are

also perishable; either we may pass away at any moment or the things may leave us without notice. Yet, not realising this fleeting nature of life, the seeker was under delusion and went after them in his earlier lives and thus created bad Karmas for himself. But, now with the dawn of proper understanding (verse-17) and the Initiation from his Guru (verse-20), he clearly sees that the Karmas, which he himself had created earlier, are taking a heavy toll on him (verses 23 to 26). He realises it, gets reconciled with it and graciously accepts it as his fate; and he also knows that the only means of overcoming his fate is a *total surrender* to the All-Merciful Lord Who is '*Arul-mayam'*, who is a mass of Grace Itself.

So he accepts that no one is to be blamed for one's problems except oneself. He beseeches the Lord for His Grace to be freed from this horrible situation. He has been praying and praying. Finally, in this verse, he addresses the Lord as "Gold, Gem, Eternally Real and Grace-Mass" all which are of an enduring nature, as against the 'lightning-like fleeting' nature of life here. This is a powerful invocation revealing his utter helplessness and surrender.

Verses 23 to 27 describe the miserable and desperate condition of the seeker. He realises the power of *Ariyaamai* (Ignorance, *Avidya*) in the form of deep-rooted Samskaras of past Karmas which can harass a person to any extent when they manifest themselves in the conscious level. He has become so desperate that within the 4 verses (24,25, 26 and 27), he appeals to the Lord for 'Grace' (அருள்) in 3 verses. Again, in the whole work only here we find the appeal for 'Grace' (அருள்) in two consecutive verses (26 and 27) which shows how helpless and desperate he is for the Lord's grace. It also indicates the maturing of his Vairagya, which ripens in verse-33.

We may wonder why there is so much delay in the descent of Divine Grace. The Lord has His own reasons. Firstly, He

wants that the Karmas buried in the Avidya that started coming out should exhaust themselves. Secondly, He also wants the seeker's surrender to be complete, which can happen only when he is driven to the extreme of helplessness. Hard earned wealth is valued. More so is Divine Grace. So the Lord waits and allows the Karmas to exhaust themselves. And the seeker continues his daily practice in the midst of all problems for a considerably long time, pinning his faith in the Lord's grace.

One more interesting thing to note is that in this verse the seeker does not pray to the Lord for His Grace but addresses the Lord as 'Grace' -- '*Ponne Maniye Porule ARULE, Manne Mayileriya Vaanavane'*. The Lord is Grace ITSELF, a Mass of Grace! When so addressed, He could not tarry anymore! And Lo! He comes, as a torrential shower of Grace, as we will see in the next verse!

Ignorant of the real nature of the Lord, we take this transitory world as real and go after it. What is the nature of the Lord? He is the only worthy Object; the objects of the world are perishable. He is like gold, a rare substance which has intrinsic worth, which is self-shining and lasting. He is self-luminous like the gem Carbuncle. He is the Supreme Reality, the source of everything. Above all, He is an embodiment of compassion, a mass of love, a concrete form of grace. He is the eternal King of the Universe, as against the finite nature of the things of the world. He rides on the fast-moving divine peacock, to confer His blessings on devotees, instantaneously.

The seeker realises that he has been eagerly going after and hugging the worldly objects since so many births. They do not leave him now easily for his saying, "I do not want them, I want only God?" No. The world has its hold on us and continues to have, because we wanted it and went after it, though we may not want it now. Often, devotees and Sadhakas are unable to find out the reason for the persistence of the

impact of worldly objects, misery, and suffering, in spite of their sincerely trying to reject the worldly objects and seeking God with true love for Him. Devotees who truly dedicate themselves to God, who honestly seek Him, often find themselves in a peculiar predicament of an inner, un-understandable longing for the world in the form of subtle desires. They are at a loss to know the reason for the same. Arunagirinathar gives a clue to this perplexing riddle. The things that we cherished, wanted and hugged before come and have their say now, though they are not wanted now. This is the reason for the present suffering of devotees. But, by this, the saint wants to drive at a greater secret. We wanted them before, so they come now; even so, as we do not want them now, they shall leave us when the force that brought them is over. Our present difficulty should not therefore deter us from our pursuit of seeking God. Even as the things wanted before come now, God, whom we now sincerely seek, will surely come. Thus, there is a guarantee that God will come, if we persist in our longing for Him. The transitory world's persisting impact upon us, in spite of our really wanting God, should not discourage us, but should be a source of inspiration to put forth greater efforts to attain God, which attainment is assured by the very same law that works unfailingly. What an encouragement to dispirited and drooping souls!

Hence, realising the transient nature of the life phenomenal, we should turn our attention to God, Who is the Supreme Being, the Eternal Reality, the Ocean of Compassion, Who is ever ready to help those who take refuge in Him; and the world would soon cease to have its hold on us. To be freed from the clutches of Karmas that bring us again and again to this fleeting life, resort to the Lord is the only means. "O Lord, is it due to my (bad) fate that I suffer now, taking this evanescent life as real?" Such depressive moods do come in the life of Sadhakas, even after considerable progress. But there is

no room for despair, because "He is an embodiment of compassion, He is the Eternal Reality, the Unchanging One." What a contrasting comparison. Life is transitory, like the lightning-flash that appears and in a moment disappears; the Lord is Eternal and Graceful. Let the drooping spirit, therefore, find consolation and continue its Sadhana, awaiting the day of the dawn of His grace, is the instruction of the Saint.

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VERSE-28

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ஆனா அமுதே அயில்வேல் அரசே
ஞானாகரனே நவிலத் தகுமோ
யானாகிய என்னை விழுங்கி வெறும்
தானாய் நிலைநின்றது தற்பரமே.

Aanaa amuthe ayilvel arase,
Jnaanaa karane navilat thakumo
Yaanaakiya ennai vizhungi verum,
Thaanaai nilai ninrathu that parame.

O Imperishable Nectar Divine! O King with the sharp Vel!
O Embodiment of Wisdom! What further to tell?
'That' which was, duly swallowing 'me' -- the individual,
As Mere Existence, was the Reality Transcendental.

"O Imperishable Divine Nectar! O King with the sharp Vel! O Wisdom-Mass! Can anything be said (further)? (No. Because) Swallowing up (my) individuality constituting I-ness, 'That' which was as 'Mere Existence' was the Transcendental Reality Itself."

Commentary

Even when the seeker was driven to the utmost point of helplessness, being an undaunted aspirant, he continued his Sadhana with the power of his Guru's Initiation, and also desperately appealing for the Lord's Grace in 2 consecutive verses (verses 26 and 27). And the Grace of God comes in a

manner astonishing to the seeker himself. His mind which was unable even to think of God (verse-23) and was disturbed by memories of past sex enjoyments (verse-24) and was forced to run about here and there taking interest in family and mundane matters against his will (verse 25), and was assailed by his past Karmas (Avidya or Ignorance, '*Ariyaamai*'), is now graced with such deep meditation that it touches the fringe of Cosmic Consciousness. What is not possible with Divine Grace!

This is a marvellous verse which graphically describes the progressive stages in real meditation, which the seeker enjoyed after such a long ordeal. Now he has successfully passed through the ordeal. He is able to meditate to his heart's content without distractions and he has different experiences in meditation, in stages. Of course, these stages do not come in one day. They are the progressing stages experienced in his mediation when practised regularly over a period. Broadly speaking, the meditating-mind or Jiva-consciousness experiences three stages before it enters into a kind of lower stage of Samadhi, as if touching the fringe of Cosmic Consciousness, or God or Self.

First stage: ('*Aanaa Amuthu*' – ஆனா அமுது -- "Imperishable Nectar"(-- Meditation starts with duality)*Dwaita*), i.e., there is the meditator and the Object of meditation, or the mind as the meditating consciousness and God/Self as *Satchidananda* (perennial nectar or a mass of Bliss) ('*Aanaa Amuthu*' – ஆனா அமுது(on which meditation is done. Real meditation is sweet like nectar. The meditation is so blissful that one will never get satiated, i.e., one wants to continue more and more. This is in contrast with the fleeting pleasures of the senses which become boring and nauseating after some time, wearing away the senses and causing debility, anxiety, diseases and sin. But to a devotee or seeker of Truth thought of God or meditation is a source of unending joy; it is

life-giving nectar.The mind that thinks of God gets more and more absorbed in Him, and He is experienced as Divine Nectar, which becomes sweeter and sweeter as one goes on tasting it. More intense thinking of God leads to more absorption in Him. The joy of contemplation on God is so sweet that the devotee does not want to forget Him even for a moment. So it is said as '*Aanaa Amuthu*' – ஆனா அமுது. At times, the Sadhaka forgoes his meals and even sleep to enjoy the bliss of meditation. When this meditation deepens, by prolonged practice over a period, it goes beyond the dualistic feeling of the meditator being separate from the Object of meditation.

Second stage: ('*AyilVel Arasu'*– அயில் வேல் அரசு -- "King with the sharp Vel"(-- The Vel represents Wisdom and is often identified with the Lord, Who is an embodiment of Wisdom. The Vel rests on the person of the Lord; it is almost inseparable from Him, yet it is not one with Him. Similarly, in the second stage, the meditation becomes so deep and the mind very subtle and pure as to feel very close to God/Self that he is neither one with nor different from God. The Jiva rests on the Self, like the Vel on the Lord, but not yet merged into it. Thus the dualistic idea of the first stage is transcended into that of "neither one with nor different from," (*Visishtadwaita*).

The Vel (Spear) has a long stem and its leaf is broad in the middle and sharp at the top. The meditative consciousness in the higher reaches of meditation is like the Vel — deep in thought, broad in vision and sharp in understanding. The joy that was experienced in the first stage draws the Jiva more and more to the Self, and the soul longs for a deeper experience and gets closer to the Self such that it now rests, as it were, on the latter. The collected, pointed, and totally concentrated mind gets so much absorbed in meditation that it feels a kind of nearness and oneness with the Self; it almost becomes one with the Object of meditation, though its individuality is still there, even

as the Vel is with the Lord. This is the second stage. When that meditation deepens by uninterrupted and dedicated practice, the third stage is reached.

Third Stage: (‘*Jnanaakaran*’ – ஞானாகரன் -- “Wisdom-Mass”) -- Then comes the third and highest stage in meditation, in which the Lord is experienced as "*Jnaanaakaran*," i.e., an embodiment of Wisdom, an ocean of *Satchidananda*. The perfectly concentrated mind, which in its essence is also consciousness, due to prolonged resting of itself on the Self in meditation, is about to merge itself into its source, the Self (Atman or Universal Consciousness) that is the substratum for all Jivas. It is like a river at the confluence. When the river is about to enter the ocean, at the confluence, it exclaims, "O how huge is the ocean; water and water alone everywhere!" But, before it could understand or try to say anything about its further experience, it is totally mingled with the ocean, it has lost itself and can therefore say nothing. The river has become the ocean itself and the question of saying anything about the ocean does not arise now. Even so, is the condition of the Jiva in that final experience. The Jiva that is close to the Self (stage 2), when it deepens its meditation, is like the river at the confluence of the ocean. The Jiva exclaims, "*Jnaanaakarane!*" — O Embodiment of Wisdom! — "O, it is Light everywhere, on all sides!" And before it could know anything further, it is lost in that Mass of Light. Hence, after saying, "O Embodiment of Wisdom," the seeker exclaims, "Can anything be said (further)?" When this stage is attained, the meditating consciousness is lost in, or over-powered by, God/Self, as it were, and the Self alone remains, as a Mass of Infinite Knowledge (‘*Jnanaakaran*’ -- ஞானாகரன்((*Adwaita*). What happens further is indescribable, because the Jiva-consciousness or I-consciousness which regarded itself as the ‘Me’ or ‘meditator’ gets swallowed up (‘*Yaanaagiya Ennai Vizhungi*’ – யானாகிய என்னை விழுங்கி(by ‘THAT’, i.e., the Supreme

Reality, which Alone remains as Mere Existence)'*Verum Thaanaai Nilai Nintra athu Tarparam*' – வெறும் தானாய் நிலை நின்ற அது தற்பரம்(.

In the first half of the verse, the seeker gives a description of the three progressive stages in meditation even as he was experiencing them *at that time*, and so they are in the present-tense. He could not 'say' anything further as he has been swallowed up by THAT. And so, the further experience (in the second half) he gives in the past-tense, as it is a recollection of that Grand near Samadhi experience, after his return to normal consciousness. He gives a glimpse of what the Grand Experience was like, as also the experiences that preceded it, so that struggling souls may know, when they have similar experiences, that they are proceeding on the right path and are approaching that Grand-Experience.

The closest experience in our daily life of விழுங்கி – '*Vizhungi*' – 'Swallowed', is that of deep sleep, which can explain, at least to some extent, about the above-mentioned experiences. When we want to go to sleep, we first lie down on the bed, slowly withdraw the mind from all the limps, and the withdrawn (concentrated) mind enters into the heart which is its abode. Upto this, we know what happens to us. Then we fall asleep, not knowing when and how we slipped into sleep. When we are asleep, we know nothing, as we are in the causal body, the store-house of the *Sanchita Karmas*, which is *Avidya* or Ignorance, *Tamas* or darkness, in which we are drowned or by which we are over-powered. We are not dead then but are alive, we have consciousness or awareness, but yet we do not know anything. Why? Because, the consciousness/mind/ego is enveloped by or 'drowned' in (விழுங்கி) *Tamas* (ignorance) or darkness. So, we *know*, because the mind or consciousness is there; but we *know* 'nothing' because the mind is enveloped by darkness. It is like a man with wide open eyes in a totally dark

room. He can see, as his eyes are open, and he *sees*, but *sees* 'nothing' because he is immersed in or enveloped by darkness. So also, when we are asleep, as the mind/ego/ consciousness/awareness is there, we *know* but *know* 'nothing', because we are enveloped by or 'drowned' in darkness or *Tamas*. Even that fact that we *know* 'nothing' is not known at that time but only after waking up. So on getting up from sleep we say: "I *was* fast asleep. I *knew* 'nothing' (because there was only darkness). I *was* blissful." And so, it is said in the past tense. Similarly in that Final Experience of near Samadhi, the meditating-consciousness is 'swallowed up' by the Supreme Reality Which alone IS. The meditator is over-powered, as it were, by the Supreme Reality which is Infinite Knowledge)சோதிப் பிழம்பு((ஞானாகரன்). This he could not know at that time but knows only after coming to normal consciousness, by way of recollection. Hence, the seeker says, in the past tense: யானாகிய என்னை விழுங்கி வெறும் தானாய் நிலை நின்றது தற்பரம். The Jiva-consciousness or I-consciousness which regarded itself as the 'Me' or 'meditator' ('*Yaanaagiya Ennai* -- யானாகிய என்னை) got swallowed up ('*Vizhungi*' -- விழுங்கி(by 'THAT' ('Athu' --அது) , i.e., the Supreme Reality, (*Tarparam* -- தற்பரம்) which Alone remained as Mere Existence)'*Verum Thaanaai Nilai Nintra* -- வெறும் தானாய் நிலை நின்ற(. All this is a great mystery. Our explanation is only a feeble apology – நவிலத்தகுமோ**!** Yet, it will give some idea about it.

In the dark room, we are enveloped by ordinary darkness; in sleep, by spiritual darkness or ignorance (*A-vidya*). But in near Samadhi Experience, we are enveloped by *Jnana* or *Vidya* or Supreme Wisdom or Light or Infinite Consciousness -- all these mean the Supreme Reality.

விழுங்கி – '*Vizhungi*' – Swallow: It does not mean one thing is swallowed by another thing, like we swallow food. In

the highest stage of meditation, when the meditating Jiva or I-consciousness experiences God as a Mass of Infinite Consciousness (‘*Jnanaakaran*’ -- ஞானாகரன்(, it is enveloped or sourrounded by That or the Mass of Consciousness from all sides, or becomes a content of That; and so the Jiva feels it is ‘Swallowed’ by That.

‘விழுங்கி’ – ‘*Vizhungi*’ -- Swallowing ‘Me’ which is the ‘I’, ‘THAT’ which remained as Mere Existence was the Supreme Reality. The word ‘விழுங்கி’ or ‘swallowing’ is very significant and implies that the ego (jiva-consciousness) was only ‘drowned’ in the Cosmic Consciousness but remained intact, as it’s root-cause Avidya or *Ariyamai* was not destroyed, which will be disclosed in the next verse. Only in verse-42 it is categorically mentioned that Avidya is ‘destroyed’. Here it is only a high level in meditation; it is not the final *Samadhi* or Superconscious State or Attainment of the Goal, which is categorically declared as ‘Attained’ in verses 42, 43 and 44. Many aspirants at this stage think they have attained Samadhi or God and stop their practices. Hence Swami Sivananda gives a warning and says: “At this stage many aspirants make the sad mistake of thinking that they have attained the Goal and stop their practices; they go about preaching and mixing with all kinds of people and eventually have a downfall. They should not stop but continue their practice till the Goal is reached.”

The prayer in verse-2 was for ‘*Ennai* **Izhanda** *Nalam’* which is Liberation. Here it is only ‘*Ennai* **vizhungi***’* which clearly indicates that it was not Liberation but only a glimpse of Cosmic Consciousness, which of course is not a small achievement.

Arunagiri refers to "Mere Existence")வெறும் தான்) as "*Adhu,*"(அது) in Tamil, which means "That." It is not ‘He’ or ‘She’, but ‘That’. Our usual concepts of Gods and Goddesses as either being Male or Female are all transcended in that

Experience Whole. Hence, the Saint denotes it by saying "That." That which is the Absolute, stands as Mere Existence. That is all. Nothing more can be said about it.

It will be interesting to note here that in verse 13, it was seen that "*Adhu*" (That) itself is Murugan, is the Lord with the Vel, and is our Guru. The stages of experience mentioned in this verse as "*Aanaa Amudhe — Ayil Vel Arase — Jnaanaakarane*" are in the reverse order of the experience revealed in verse 13 as "*Murugan — Thani Vel Muni — Nam Guru*." This order in the two verses seems to have great significance and reveal certain truths: (1) *Murugan* and *Jnaanaakaran* stand for the Absolute — *Advaitam*; (2) *Thani Vel Muni* and *Ayil Vel Arase* denote oneness and yet difference — *Visishtadvaitam*; and (3) *Nam Guru* and *Aanaa Amudhe* refer to the disciple and Guru, and devotee and God, respectively — *Dvaitam*.

Thus, in verse 13, it is God coming to the human level (as Guru); the Absolute manifesting itself in the relative plane — a descending order. In this verse, it is man raising himself to God's level, the relative or the Jiva, experiencing the Absolute — an ascending order. The term "*Adhu*" (That) is used in both the verses; which, in the earlier case, becomes the Guru, and which, in the latter case, the Jiva becomes.

The same experience as was had in verse 13 maybe said to be had now also, but it is had after due Sadhana or effort from the Jiva's side. We may say that while the former was "given," the latter is "attained." The experience was given to provide the needed incentive to strive for and attain.

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VERSE-29

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இல்லேஎனும் மாயையில் இட்டனை நீ
பொல்லேன் அறியாமை பொறுத்திலையே
மல்லேபுரி பன்னிரு வாகுவில் என்
சொல்லே புனையும் சுடர் வேலவனே.

Ille enum maayaiyil ittanai nee,
Pollen ariyaamai poruththilaiye
Malle puri panniru vaakuvil en,
Solle punaiyum sudar velavane.

Into this non-existent Maya, You have me involved;
Alas, this wicked one's ignorance You have not pardoned!
On Your mighty shoulders, ten and two, valiant to wrestle,
My poem-garlands You wear, O Lord of Luminous Vel!

"O Lord! with the luminous Vel! On Thine twelve mighty and valiant shoulders that are fit for wrestling, Thou wearest my garland of praises! Thou hast entangled me in this Maya which is said to be non-existent. Alas, You have not absolved (pardoned) me, who is of evil-deeds, of my ignorance!"

Commentary

In that stupendous experience of Infinite Knowledge and Bliss where the ego was ‘swallowed up’ and the Supreme Reality alone shone in all its glory (previous verse), Maya seemed to have disappeared or become non-existent; and the seeker had a feeling that he is free from Maya and his Ignorance

has gone. But after return to normal consciousness, he realises that he is still in Maya, that he has his weaknesses as before and that his *Avidya* is still there, i.e., not forgiven or destroyed (*Ariyaamai poruththilai*). Maya and Avidya (Ignorance) are the same --- the former is universal while the latter is individual. So he pleads to the Lord: "O Lord! You have once again involved me in this Maya which appeared to be non-existent! You have not forgiven or pardoned (destroyed) the Ignorance of this evil-natured person! What a pity!!"

The Sadhaka, after a glimpse of cosmic-consciousness in the higher reaches of his meditation (verse 28), comes down to normal consciousness, because the *Mula-Avidya* (ignorance), which is the essence of individuality (Jivatva) and the repository of Karmas, is not as yet destroyed ("*Pollen Ariyaamai Porutthilai*"). That he refers to himself as '*pollen*' (of evil nature) clearly shows that he is conscious of there being some more evil or bad karmas (*Sanchita Karmas*) to his credit to be finished (which point is made explicit in verse-31), all which mean that this experience of verse-28 was not actual God-Realisation or Attainment of God. Hence the word '*Vizhungi*' (swallowed) was used there to indicate the non-destruction of Ignorance, which fact is confirmed in this verse. Whereas in verse-44, wherein when he comes to normal consciousness after that '*Pesaa Anubhuti*' (God-Realisation) experience (verse-43), he beholds God's Feet (presence) everywhere and there is no more Maya. It is only in Verse 42 that it is categorically affirmed that Avidya is destroyed ("*Ariyaamai Attradhu*"); and "*Pesaa Anubhuthi Piranthathu*" of verse 43 proclaims attainment of God-experience; both of which are followed by the confirmation of the grant of the Lord's Lotus-Feet which is Moksha, in verse 44.

The immediate experience on return to world-consciousness is a little distressing to the Sadhaka on account of

the diametrically opposite and irreconcilable contrast between the two experiences. In that state of glimpse of God-Consciousness, *Satchidananda* alone was, and that experience convinced him that the world (Maya) does not really exist; but on return from that meditation, he has to live in it and deal with it. This predicament of the Sadhaka is so precisely and touchingly portrayed in the verse as '*Ille enum Mayai-il ittanai*'.

இல்லே எனும் மாயை, '*Ille enum Maayai*' – "The non-existent Maya": "Maayaa" is basically a Sanskrit word, and its etymological meaning is 'that which is not'. What is Maya? And why is it said to be non-existent? The Absolute (Brahman) is unconditioned existence and it cannot admit of anything else as it is second-less, and so this world cannot exist in addition to it. If this phenomenal world is admitted as a real entity having an independent existence of its own other than Brahman, it would mean the acceptance of a limitation to the Absolute or Brahman, in which case the Absolute would be no Absolute, which is untenable. It cannot be that something else also exists independently side-by-side with the Absolute. Hence, (the things of) the world cannot be attributed with any real existence. They are only phases or appearances of Reality, just as waves in the ocean are only phases of the waters of the ocean. The waves have neither a real existence of their own nor are they essentially different from the ocean. The wave is water, is the ocean. Hence, to attribute any independent reality to the waves, apart from the ocean in which they partake of their existence, would only mean ignorance of Truth. So is the case with this *Samsara* (phenomenal existence), which has no independent existence apart from *Satchidananda* (the Absolute or Brahman). But, somehow the world is taken as a sole reality, as having a reality of its own, forgetting the underlying Reality, which latter is often even denied its existence. Thus, not only a world is seen which does not really exist, but also the great

Reality that alone appears as this world is ignored. How strange! What is it due to? This is called Maya. To perceive something which really is not, and not see That which alone is, is Maya. But, is Maya a substantial thing? No. It is not that Maya has any existence, it is not an entity by itself; it is only a term used to describe our inability to understand the relation, if at all there is any, between the phenomenal and the Real, in our present predicament. That which really is not and which yet appears to be, and whose relation to the Absolute cannot be satisfactorily explained (there being no real relation, as the Absolute cannot admit of any relation) is explained as Maya. It is only an initial concept introduced to solve the riddleless riddle of phenomenal existence. It is like the "X" that is employed in solving algebraic equations, which vanishes together with the problem when the sum is solved. When the Absolute is experienced, there is neither the world nor are we — much less "Maya." Hence, Maya is said to be non-existent.

Probably, at this stage God induces the Sadhaka to compose songs, i.e., record his experiences or write books, as he is now endowed with the rare insight into both this life and 'That' experience.

Perhaps in that near cosmic experience he was able to visualise his causal body or Avidya or bundle of *Sanchita Karmas* which contained many horrible Karmas of the past lives. So, he says: '***Pollen*** *Ariyaamai poruththilaiye*'

A totally ignorant man takes the world as a solid reality and all his actions are based on a firm conviction of the reality of the objects of the world. For him, no other reality exists, not even God. He wants to acquire and possess things, enjoy them and be happy. The world is indeed his God. Thus, to the worldly man, Maya (or the world) is real. But, to a sage of Self-realisation, Maya is unreal; it does not exist at all, for he is established in the awareness of God (the Self) in which

phenomenality is transcended. Only the seeker, -- that too the one who has evolved to a great extent, -- is in a peculiar condition. To the seeker, Maya is neither real nor unreal. He knows that the Absolute alone is real and that the world has no real existence. But this is only a theoretical conviction which has not become his actual experience. What he experiences is the world which stares at him and with which he has to have dealings. He is still unable to shake off this relative experience. Neither can he negate the world (names and forms) and see the world as God, as a saint does, because he has not realised or experienced the Absolute; nor can he hug it as a total reality as a worldly man does, because he has understood its essence-less nature. Such is the condition of the seeker or aspirant, to whom Maya is "said to be" non-existent (இல்லே எனும் மாயை).

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VERSE-30

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செவ்வான் உருவில் திகழ்வேலவன் அன்று
ஒவ்வாதது என உணர்வித்த (அ)துதான்
அவ்வாறு அறிவார் அறிகின்றது அலால்
எவ்வாறு ஒருவர்க்கு இசைவிப்பதுவே.

Sevvaan uruvil thikazh velavan anru ,
Ovvaathathu ena unarvitthathu thaan
avvaaru arivaar arikinrathu alaal,
Evvaaru oruvarkku isaivippathuve.

Velayudhan, bright like crimson-sky, gave me that day
That Divine Experience unique; which experience gay,
Unless it is had and experienced as such, — the only way,—
How can that be told to another? Is it something to say!

"Lord Vel-Murugan, Whose Form shines bright like the crimson sky (at sunset/sunrise), revealed to me, on that day, an Experience which was unique. One has to have that Experience in the same manner, there being no other way; how, then, can that be described in words to another!"

Commentary

To overcome the feeling of remorse (dejection) (of the previous verse) that he has to live in this world of Maya after having had that grand Experience of near Samadhi, the seeker recollects that unique experience (of verse-28) again and again,

which brings him great joy and goads him try for it again with hope and enthusiasm.

"Lord Murugan revealed to me, **on that day**, an Experience which was unique." 'On that day' refers to the day when he had the unique Experience of near Samadhi (verse-28). It is unique because it was had after great struggle coupled with grace of God. How? After being initiated into the technique of proper meditation by his Guru (verse-20), after practising deep meditation accordingly to realise God, with initial success (verses-21 & 22), after being assailed by the surging *Samskaras* from the unconscious which almost made him break down and do total surrender to God seeking His help and grace (verses-23 to 27), when the *Samskaras* got exhausted and God's grace descended on him, he was able to enter into deep meditation. And after passing through the three progressive stages in meditation which he could describe, he had the *near Samadhi experience* about which he said 'inexpressible' (நவிலத்தகுமோ) (verse-28). To that Experience, he refers in this verse as: "Lord Murugan revealed to me, **on that day**, an Experience which was unique," and adds, "One has to have that Experience in the same manner, as there is no other way; how, then, can that be described in words to another!" (எவ்வாறு ஒருவர்க்கு இசைவிப்பதுவே!).

"How can that 'near Samadhi experience' be described in words to others!" Perhaps, having heard that he had such an incomparable experience in meditation, other seekers became curious to know what that experience was. So, he tells them that that Experience was Unique and cannot be explained. It was an inner revelation and has to be had as such, each for oneself. It cannot be expressed in words to another. '*Isaivippaduve'* of this verse refers to that grand experience of verse-28, where it was mentioned as '*Navilattagumo*'. Both these words mean and denote the same experience.

Though the return to world-consciousness was a little distressing and irreconcilable (verse 29), a remembrance of that glimpse of God-consciousness (of verse 28) fills the Sadhaka with an inner joy that makes him feel a sense of gratitude to his Guru/God.

The crimson-lit sky at sunset/sunrise has a special charm and beauty which cannot be adequately explained in words. There is no comparison to it. It produces a thrill in one's heart. If this is the case with a part of the sky, what about Lord Murugan's shining form, whose not only hands or feet but whose whole being is crimson in colour (verse 25)? He is an embodiment of beauty. He is charm personified. The nearest comparison conceivable is that of the sunset sky which itself has no comparison. The glory and beauty of the Unknown and Invisible is, thus, made to be realised through the known and visible. Even that beauty of the crimson sky of our daily experience can only be experienced and not conveyed. Crimson or redness denotes perfection, apart from beauty. The Lord who is all-red is a mass of Beauty and Perfection. That Lord Murugan who shines like the red-sky, Who has no comparison, revealed that experience which is incomparable or Unique!

Great Gurus, though they cannot relate their experience to their disciples, can guide them suitably and make them have it for themselves. Though we cannot explain the sweetness of sugar-candy, we can make the other person open his mouth, put a piece into his mouth, make him taste and experience it. Such is the power of Master-Souls, the Great Ones, who have been specially commissioned by God. Not only is the sugar-candy to be tasted by oneself, it should be done by everyone in the same way, i.e., its sweetness cannot be tasted by seeing it or smelling it but only by putting it into the mouth. Hence, it is said that unless one has that experience in the way in which he had, i.e., an inner revelation, it cannot be even experienced otherwise,

much less explained. The Lord should choose to reveal It to us and only then can we know what It is.

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VERSE-31

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பாழ்வாழ்வு எனுமிப் படுமாயையிலே
வீழ்வாய்என என்னை விதித்தனையே
தாழ்வானவை செய்தனதாம் உளவோ
வாழ்வாய் இனி நீ மயில்வாகனனே.

Paazh vaazhvu enumip padu-maayaiyile,
Veezhvaai ena ennai vithitthanaiye
Thaazhvaanavai seithanathaam ulavo,
Vaazhvaai ini nee mayil vaaganane.

Into this evanescent life of Maya perishable,
Alas, You ordained me to fall and roll!
Are there deeds done by me, low and sinful?
O Peacock-Riding Lord! May Thou live long and well!

"O Peacock-Rider! Thou hast ordained me to fall and suffer in this evanescent, phenomenal life of perishable Maya! O Lord, are there sinful and unbecoming deeds done by me in the past (as the cause for this)? May Thou live long!"

Commentary

The impact of that near Samadhi Experience (verse-28) was such that he could not forget it for a long time. The memory of it comes up again and again, but this time bringing him both remorse and joy --- remorse that the Lord has ordained him to fall once again in this meaningless life of Maya, and joy that he now knows why the Lord did so. Because

he was unhappy with the Lord (almost blaming Him) for involving him into this life of Maya again (verse-29) after that grand experience (verse-28), the Lord revealed to him that He did so not because He wanted to do it but because of the seeker's some horrible Karmas of the past yet remaining (as the Prarabdha/Sanchita Karmas) (verse-35). So, the seeker says: "O Lord! Are there some very, very despicable or mean (heinous) Karmas done by me in my previous births still in store!?" Of course, the answer 'yes' is implied in it. And for giving this clear understanding he is so happy that he also thanks, rather blesses, the Lord, saying '*Vaazhvaai*' -- 'May You prosper and live long, O Peacock-Rider!' He is happy because, once you know the cause of suffering, it is undergone happily; and also it is easy to find a remedy/solution for it.

'*Padu Maayai*'—'Perishable Maya': This seems to imply that the seeker is already foreseeing and confident of soon destroying the Maya which is perishable, by determined effort.

Life on earth is not lasting. It comes and goes. It is evanescent. This life is as transitory as a dream. Things quickly vanish, leaving no trace of their existence, as in a dream. Hence, the phenomenal life is called Mayaic. Maya itself is perishable, i.e., is not a substantial, ever-lasting something. It is said to have no beginning but has an end; it ceases when one attains God. Maya is, therefore, refered to as "*Padu*," (perishable). How evanescent, then, should be a world conjured up by this Maya, which itself is perishable? Yet, it is governed by exact, scientific laws — the most inexorable being the Law of Karma. We inevitably reap the fruits of our past deeds; we are responsible for our happiness and suffering. There is no use blaming God or someone else for our present condition. If we suffer this misery of life in a sense-world, it is because we took it as real, wanted it, and hugged it, not knowing its illusory nature, and also forgetting God and His greatness.

God does not put one into this *Samsara* wantonly out of hatred or prejudice. He neither hates nor loves anyone. He is the same to all. But, His divine law works so precisely that we are rewarded with the fruits of our actions. God is the dispenser of justice and He ordains each one to take birth in such circumstances as would be conducive for the working out of one's past Karmas. He, thus, paves the way for one's evolution, as no salvation is possible unless the Karmas are worked out. Are we not to be grateful to God for this kind act of His in providing us the necessary field in the form of this "transitory world" so that we may work out our Karmas and attain the Eternal Abode of Peace and Bliss? God has created an evanescent world, lest we should be pleased with it even if it be full of pain and suffering. The Gita says that this world is *Anityam* and *Asukham*; it is not merely painful (*Asukham*), it is non-lasting also, i.e., transitory (*Anityam*). Though painful, if it were still to be eternal, perhaps we might get attached to it and would like to live here itself permanently! If one dreams of having a vast treasure, perhaps he would like to perpetuate the dream and be a rich man even with the concomitant pains and anxieties. Hence it is that dreams are so construed as to last but for a moment; they are *Anitya* compared to waking. And this Mayaic life is so, compared to the waking of God-Consciousness. Hence, God has created an evanescent world conjured up by His Maya which is not lasting, and this He has done for our own good. Yet, in our ignorance we are accustomed to blame God for our birth and suffering in this world, saying, "O Lord, what a pity, You have ordained me to be born in this world and suffer!" But then there comes a time when we realise that not God but we are responsible for this and that there are past evil deeds of ours on account of which the Lord has made us born here, which is for our own ultimate good. Then it is that we begin to realise the greatness, mercy, and compassion of the Lord, when we cannot but feel grateful to Him and praise Him from the core of our being, "Lord, how

compassionate art thou! How merciful art thou! May thou live long!" All this is so touchingly conveyed by Saint Arunagirinathar in this verse.

We suffer because of our past deeds. If we resort to God, through singing His praise and glorification, we cross over His Maya and get freed from Samsara. The world-show is often compared to the play of hide-and-seek. The granny initiates the play and the children are subject to the laws of the play only so long as they enjoy the play and do not get tired of it. But the moment any child gets tired and comes back to the granny, he is freed at once from the play and its laws. So long as one takes life as real and enjoys it, one is involved in it. What can the Lord do for it? But, getting tired with this Mayaic life, realising its utter essencelessness, if one resorts to the Lord, one's sufferings come to an end. To praise the Lord, to sing His glories, to do Japa, worship, meditation, etc., are the various means of resorting to the Lord to get freed from Samsara. "Due to my past deeds thou hast put me into this Samsara. But hereafter I will devote myself wholly to Thy glorification only, O Peacock-Rider. Live Thou Long!"

"O Lord! Thou art Satchidananda, and that is enough for me; my little, passing world-experience of suffering and pain is nothing." — This underlying idea seems to be pulsating through the verse. Such moods can be had and maintained only in somewhat advanced stages. This is a peculiar state in which the seeker undergoes the bodily sufferings brought on him by his Karmas, but remains blissful within by maintaining the meditative consciousness by inner attunement with God through silent glorification.

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VERSE-32

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கலையே பதறிக் கதறித் தலையூடு
அலையே படுமாறு அதுவாய் விடவோ
கொலையேபுரி வேடர்குலப் பிடிதோய்
மலையே மலைகூறிடு வாகையனே.

Kalaiye patharik katharit thalaiyuudu,
Alaiye padumaaru athuvaai vidavo
Kolaiye puri vedar kulap pidithoy,
Malaiye malai kooridu vaakaiyane.

Excitedly screaming the scriptures, and in the intellect
Waves of confusion to dash, am I to be lost in that?
O Embracer of the hunter-caste she-elephant!
O Mountain-cleaving Victory-Garlanded! OLord,
Great like Mount!

"O Lord Skanda, Who art Great like a mountain, Who embraced the she-elephant (Valli Devi) of the cruel hunter-caste, Who cleft the Krauncha-mountain (with His Vel) and Who wears the victory-garlands! Debating on the scriptures with (feverish) excitement, and with waves (of confusion) to dash in my head (i.e., brain or intellect), should I be lost in that? (O Lord, let it not happen.)"

Commentary

Having now known that the Lord ordained him into this life of Maya because of some terrible and obstructive Karmas,

the Sadhaka seeks to solve the problem by embracing the Order of Sannyasa (next verse) as the only solution. Because only by *Jnana* or Knowledge are all Karmas reduced to ashes. '*Jnanagnih Sarvakarmani Bhasmasat Kurute tatha*' says the Bhagavad Gita (IV-37). Otherwise, he may have to take several births to finish those Karmas.

The sprout of *Vairagya* or dispassion towards this illusory life was visible in the seeker as early as verse-4 (*Valaipatta*). It grew little by little in verse-9 (*Mattoorkuzhal*), then in verse-16 (*Peraasaiyenum*); it became a big tree in verses-25 (*Meiye yena*) and 27 (*Minne nigar*). Now it is flowering into renunciation or Sannyasa which, he thinks, is the only solution to break the bonds of all Karmas, which will further bear the fruit of *Jnana* ('*Vel'* in Verse-42) or *Anubhuti* or God-Realisation ('*Pesaa Anubhuti*' in Verse-43) or *Moksha* ('*Charanam*' in Verse-44). So he opens his mind to the members of his family, elders, relatives and friends, who are naturally learned in the scriptures. He tells them that he is planning to leave home and family to take Sannyasa. But, as can be expected, there was great resistance from family members, though some favoured it. As is the case with everything, opinions of people differ and scriptures also give various views, often contradictory and conflicting, as they are meant for people in different levels of evolution. And so there ensue heated debates and discussions among them, quoting different scriptures, shouting and screaming at each other, some for and many against his proposal. As the matter concerns him and he is very much involved in those debates and discussions, his mind got confused and heated up. But he does not want to waste his time in it, since it is clear to him as to what he wants to do! He has decided to act according to the knowledge which was conferred by the Lord Himself (Verse-17), i.e., '*Poomel Mayal poi ara Meippunarviir'* -- 'abandoning the delusion on this world, firmly be established in (hold on to) Reality.' Hence

the prayer in this verse: “Debating about the scriptures with feverish excitement, and waves of confusion to dash in my head (i.e., brain or intellect), should I get lost in that? (O Lord, let it not happen.)" In this prayer is also implied that he asks for the required will-power and strength of mind to stick to his resolve to renounce the family.

Learning has to bring culture and wisdom, and humility has to result from wisdom. Learning is not to become puffed up with pride. Scriptures try to bring home these truths in a variety of ways. They give instances of persons who suffered on account of their vanity due to learning. They also cite references to great men who were humble. They lay down codes of conduct, show ways and means for the development of virtues, prescribe methods of *Upasana* and contemplation on the Supreme Being, and also reveal the experiences of Realisation. The scriptures are to be studied well, understood in their true connotation, and their instructions practised diligently and God attained. Study is to end in practice and practice in experience. The purpose of learning is to live life truly, to have an understanding of life, and to attain God-Experience. Learning is to be put into practice in daily life. Learning is to live life, and life is to learn. In short, learning is life and life is learning. To attain God — to have God-Realisation — is the purpose of life, which is the purpose of learning, too.

The great Tamil saint Thiruvalluvar says, "Of what avail is one’s learning, if he worships not the sacred Feet of Him (God) who is Wisdom Supreme (and attains Him)?" (I-2). Our learning should not remain isolated from our living. They should go together.

Not merely is learning not to lead to debates and discussions, but also is not meant merely to earn a living, which unfortunately seems to be the aim of the present day education. The education of today does not equip one with the needed

knowledge of life — the knowledge that will give strength to face life, steer clear of all problems in life, and attain the purpose of life. On the other hand, when one steps out of the school or college, he is bewildered and knows not what to do next. In fact life stares at him. He has no aim in life, for his education has not given him that, and he is drifted here and there in search of a job. That is all his aim! The education he had has not prepared him to accept the challenges of life, though it might enable him to secure a job. But simply to secure a job is not the purpose of education and learning. Saint Thiruvalluvar, again, says, "Learn well that which is worth learning, and then live up to it." (Kural 40-1). "Wisdom is to experience the truth, in one's own experience, of what has been heard or learnt from whatever source."(Kural 43-3). So neither securing a lucrative job nor wasting one's life in mere reading and debating is the purpose for which learning is meant.

If learning enters into our life and forms part of our being, we become humble, realising the greatness of God; and then we have a true understanding of what the scriptures purport to convey through their variegated teachings. But when it does not become part of us and remains only in the books or in our brains, then it is that we become proud and egoistic and find it difficult to reconcile between the apparently contradicting instructions and then we start contending and entering into heated debates with similar others. And, what happens in religious debates and controversies? Man loses his decorum. He shouts and screams, and decries the other's view. He gets mentally agitated and upset, and feverishly excited. His brain gets confused and confounded. This is what is generally seen among the highly learned in whom their learning has not entered into their hearts but remained only in their intellects. Their whole life goes in studying scriptures with a view to find flaws in them, to enter into controversies with others, and parade their vanity. They get caught up in the intricacies of the

scriptures by entering into heated arguments and their learning becomes a burden and bondage; they lose the purpose of learning and the goal of life, too. Hence, the prayer, which is a warning and a caution to us: "Am I to enter into heated debates, get mentally agitated, scream at the opponent, get my intellect confounded, and thus, be lost in my learning and arguments? Lord, let this not happen. Let me not forget that the purpose of learning is to attain *Anubhuti*. Bless me that I may not be distracted and side-tracked by my learning."

Valli was found by the hunter-king Nambirajan and was brought up in the midst of hunters. Hunters live by killing animals in wild-games. They are cruel by nature. Though Valli lived amidst them, she was of divine nature; she was gentle like elephants, which walk softly, without making a sound.

Valli is the Jivatman and the cruel hunters, in whose midst she lived, are the turbulent mind and senses. The nature of the Jivatman is quite different from that of the latter. While the mind and senses are ever engaged in the wild-game of sense-pleasure, the Jiva depends on the Lord because it belongs to the Lord. Valli is compared to an elephant and the Lord to a mountain. Mountain and mountain-forests are the abodes of elephants. So is the Lord the real abode of Jivas, not the hunters or the mind and senses (body).

Lord Velayudhan wears victory garlands, dangling over His chest, on account of His victory over Surapadman and other Asuras. He has the Vel, which is the Victory-Vel. Lord Skanda's Vel killed the Asura Kraunchan who was cursed by Sage Agastya to remain in the form of a mountain till he came to be destroyed by the Lord.

The hands of the Lord that killed the Asuras also embraced Valli Devi. This means that the Lord is a terror to the wicked and a beloved to the devout. He is law and love at once.

To that Lord Velayudhan, is the prayer, "O Lord! Thou killed the Asuras and the Krauncha-mountain and wearest victory-garlands. Thou accepted Valli in Thine Divine-Fold. Pray, let my learning (which is given by thee: verse 17) not lead to vanity and debates; let it bring me *Anubhuti* (God-experience)."

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VERSE-33

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சிந்தாகுல இல்லொடு செல்வமெனும்
விந்தாடவி என்று விடப்பெறுவேன்
மந்தாகினி தந்த வரோதயனே
கந்தா முருகா கருணாகரனே.

Sinthaakula illodu selvam enum,
vinthaadavi enru vidap peruven
Manthaakini thantha varothayane,
Kanthaa murugaa karunaakarane.

The mind-distressing family, riches and gold,
From this dense forest, when shall I get freed?
O Mandakini-given Incarnation, Auspicious and Sacred!
O Lord Skanda, O Muruga, O Compassion-Embodied!

"O Lord Skanda! O Muruga! O Embodiment of Compassion! O Boon-Incarnation, born of Mandakini! When shall I get freed from this Vindhya-forest like (Samsara of) family and wealth, which are the cause of affliction to the mind?"

Commentary

In the previous verse the seeker had resolved to renounce the family and to take to the life of Sannyasa. This aspiration to renounce gets intensified by the day. And a time comes when he could not wait any more. He, therefore, appeals to the compassionate aspect of the Lord: “O Lord Skanda, Muruga,

Embodiment of Compassion, Siva's Boon-Incarnation, born of Mandakini! When shall I get freed from this entanglement of *Samsara*, from this dense Vindhya forest like family and property, which cause affliction to the mind?" In the prayer itself is implied the answer. With the Lord's grace, he soon left his home and reached (his Guru's Ashram on) the banks of the holy river Mandakini (Ganga) (which is beyond the Vindhya forest). In every verse, Arunagiri employs appropriate words in addressing the Lord. Surprisingly, after 32 verses in this work of *Kandar Anubhuti* of 51 verses, the saint refers to the river Ganga for the first time in this verse, to suggest that the seeker has gone there. The Lord is born of Mandakini (this verse), is the son of Ganga (next verse) and *Nadi-putra* --- son of a river (verse-50).

In a broad sense, all rivers (and even lakes, tanks and wells) are regared as 'Ganga'. So, on the day of Deepavali, people ask each other, 'Did you have holy Ganga-bath?', though they take bath in their homes only. Hence, the seeker may be said to have reached the Ashram of his Guru which may be on the bank of any river, not necessarily of the Ganga.

Samsara is full of pain and suffering. The problems of household life are innumerable. House, wife, children and wealth are the source of troubles. Yet, they are very enchanting and it is easy to get involved in them. They appear to be pleasing and desirable; they look charming so long as they are at a distance, so long as they are not obtained. Man struggles hard to have them and he is restless till he possesses them; but once they are obtained and enjoyed, they lose their charm and become sources of vexation and mental agony. They completely rob man of his peace of mind and make him restless. The sufferings and anxieties of family life are too well-known to all to be described. Now, having got involved in them, man might want to do away with them, but he cannot. Even if he wants to leave them, they will not leave him. Thus enmeshed, he dies

miserably. So agonising, so inextricable, so vexing, so boring are family and wealth that the Saint compares them to the forests of the Vindhya mountains in Central India. The ever-green Vindhya-forest is charming and attractive. Those who are attracted by its beauty and enter it, forget themselves in enjoying its charm until they get deep into it. But it is so thick that they find it difficult to trace their way out and are finally consumed by wild beasts of the forests. So is this life with wife, children, and wealth. It is attractive but creates problems after problems and drags man into more and more entanglements so that he gets lost in them, and all his time goes away in trying to solve the problems and free himself from entanglements. He is, thus, left with no time or energy to devote himself to God. Home and wealth are the destroyers of mental peace, they are great obstacles to spiritual progress, holds Arunagirinathar.

Though there is nothing wrong with family-life and God can be and has been attained by house-holders, the actual condition in which man generally finds himself is something different. He is tormented from all sides. Arunagirinathar is a practical saint. He can visualise people's condition. He is specially gifted with this rare art of conveying truths as they are — not only of the highest spiritual experiences in a mystical language, but also of the miserable mundane life in striking, vivid terms. "*Kandar Anubhuti*" being a treatise on "*Anubhuti*" (God-experience), the Saint has to tell things as they are — whether pleasing to us or not — which, we have to take in their true spirit.

Man gets involved in sex and greed almost unwittingly. But when he finally realises his folly and tries to leave them, he finds it impossible. He is prepared to leave them, but not they. He gets so much entangled that he cannot extricate himself from them, even as one cannot find his way out of the Vindhya-forest. So the prayer very significantly says, "When shall I get freed?" One cannot, by one's own effort, free oneself from

them. The more one tries to leave them, the more they will cling to him. The only way is to fix one's mind on God. “To get freed from other attachments, have this one attachment, i.e., the attachment to the Lotus-Feet of Him who is Unattached”, says Saint Thiruvalluvar. God only can free us from the clutches of women and gold. Therefore, is the prayer to "get freed" and not "leave". He does not say, "When shall I leave," but says, "When shall I get freed." God's grace is the means for getting freed from this Samsara. The All-merciful and Compassionate Lord has to shower His grace on us, to Whom is the prayer of this verse addressed.

Lord Skanda is a boon-incarnation. He was given as a boon by Lord Siva to the Devas. The Devas could not fight against the Asura Surapadman. They were defeated by the Asura and driven out of heaven. They approached Siva and prayed to Him for help, for the divine birth of Skanda. Siva, out of His compassion over their plight, assumed His original form of six-faces and smilingly looked at Parvati who was seated by His side. At once, from the third eye (Eye of Wisdom) of each face flashed forth a Light (*Tejas*) of extra-ordinary brilliance. It filled all space, from infinity to infinity. Siva, then withdrew it, handed it over to the wind-god and fire-god, and commanded them to carry it to river Ganga (also known as Mandakini). When Ganga received it, she shelved it into a pond called *Saravanappoigai*, where the Light assumed the form of six-beautiful babies on six-lotuses. This is the "Mandakini-given" and "boon-born" Avatara of Lord Skanda. This Mandakini is referred to as Ganga in the next verse and as ‘river’ (in a most general term) in verse-50, thus showing that all rivers represent the Holy Mandakini/Ganga.

The Skanda Avatara signifies the manifestation of the Absolute in the relative plane of the five elements of ether (space), air, fire, water (Ganga), and earth, as described above. It refers to the awakening of the spiritual consciousness in the

element-bound mind of the seeker, which is agonized by and engrossed in women and gold, to be freed from which is the prayer of this verse. Another name for Skanda is Murugan, which means "One who is of eternal youth, beauty, and divine in nature." He is the Beauty of beauties and the divinity behind all things. The beauty and the value that is seen in objects is but a reflection of Him. Our attraction for home and wealth is to be transmuted into higher aspiration for God by resort to Lord Murugan. Whether He is "Mandakini-given," "boon-born," Skanda or Murugan, He is an embodiment and outcome of compassion. To that Lord, the seeker prays: "O Lord Skanda, the Devas could not themselves fight the Asura Surapadman. They prayed to Siva and You were born as a boon to them. I am also in a similar condition, unable to overcome the entanglements of home and wealth. Be gracious to be "born" in me and free me from these, O Ocean of Compassion!"

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VERSE-34

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சிங்கார மடந்தையர் தீநெறி போய்
மங்காமல் எனக்கு வரம் தருவாய்
சங்க்ராம சிகாவல ஷண்முகனே
கங்காநதி பால க்ருபாகரனே.

Singaara madanthaiyar thii neri poy,
Mangaamal enakku varam tharuvaai
Sankraama sikhaa vala shanmukhane,
Gangaa nadi baala krupaakarane.

Not to get lost in romantic women's evil ways,
And be ruined; — Grant me this boon of grace.
O Lord Shanmukha, with Peacock, battle-waging and fierce!
O Divine Son of River Ganga! O Embodiment of Grace!

"O Lord Shanmukha! with the battle-waging Peacock! O Son of River Ganga! O Embodiment of Grace! Grant me this boon that I may not be ruined by getting involved into the evil ways of enchanting, romantic women."

Commentary

The seeker has reached his Guru's Ashram on the banks of the Holy Ganga. As a preparation for entering into the Order of Sannyasa, he asks for a boon from the Lord: "O Son of River Ganga, O Embodiment of Grace! Grant me the *boon* that I may not, by any chance, get ruined by falling into the evil ways of enchanting women." It is to be noted that the prayer is not for

freedom from sex as in the earlier stages but asking for a *boon* so that he may not get entrapped unwittingly.

In the very initial stages, the Sadhaka was tormented by lust, being caught in the net of wife and children (verses 4 and 5); later on, after due Upadesa from his Guru, only his mind was tossed about by thought or presence of women (verse 9); and in the advanced stage of meditation, after proper initiation into its technique, only the impressions of past enjoyments surging out from the subconscious and unconscious levels of the mind troubled him (verse 24). Now, after the glimpse of Cosmic Consciousness (verse 28), he almost feels confident that he will no more be disturbed by sex. However, he invokes the special grace of the Lord in order that he may not slip into the evil ways by any chance, lured by romantic women; for the danger is there till one attains liberation. It is of interest to note that his prayer now is not for freedom from sex, as in the previous ones, but only a simple prayer for a 'boon', as a measure of precaution to safeguard himself from any possible/accidental happening, once he takes to a life of renunciation. Together with Divine Grace there is need for eternal vigilance on one's part and one cannot afford to be heedless at any stage. Because one can never underestimate this menace of sex-instinct, as there are instances where Tapasvins have succumbed to this even after years of penance in seclusion. Until God-Realisation is attained one has to be on guard. The Bhagavad Gita says: **'***rasopyasya param drishthva nivartate'* -- *'*The taste (for objects of enjoyment) also goes away only on seeing the Supreme.*'* (II-59)

Repetition of reference to the Lord in the previous and this verse, as the 'Son of River Ganga' and 'Embodiment of Grace' confirms that by Lord's grace the seeker has settled on the banks of Holy Ganga and that his boon has been granted.

Sex and ego persist almost till the end — till one attains God-Realization. Especially when one renounces home and wealth and remains in seclusion, there are chances of his going astray into the net of enchanting maidens. Here is, therefore, an appeal to Lord Shanmukha asking for a boon, to be saved from such a pitfall. This is a direct and simple prayer, which is the specialty of this verse. In most of the verses, the prayer is not so direct as in this one. "When will you grant? Should I suffer? How long?" — Such are the pathetic appeals in the other verses; but here it is a direct request as, "Grant me a boon." This is very significant. This shows that though one may not be troubled by sex or attracted and enchanted by women, yet, one can never feel confident enough that he has overcome lust, or that he will not fall a victim to sex. Hence, the prayer to the Lord for His grace, as a measure of protection against any chance falling into the ways of sex, in spite of himself, as the same can never be ruled out at any stage.

What is asked for is a `boon'. A boon is a divine grant, so that the malady is cured forever, unlike in human effort where the danger is always there. And from whom is this boon asked? From "*Kripaakaran*," that is, 'an embodiment of grace'. "Grace" and "granting a boon" go together. The granting is done ex-gratia. It is a "giving" even where there is no fitness for it. It is a pure act of grace or giving, out of compassion. Such a graceful giving is a boon. And that is what the seeker prays for. This lust for women is such that it cannot be totally rooted out by any amount of effort. Personal effort alone will not be of much avail in this matter. Only those who had the special grace of God were freed from this malady totally. Nothing but Divine Grace can free one from sexual lust. Hence, the seeker offers a direct prayer to the Lord in this verse asking for a boon from the Embodiment of Grace. The Lord is also addressed as the "Son of river Ganga." We have seen in the previous verse that the Lord was given as a boon to the Devas and was born of river Mandakini. Ganga and Mandakini are the same. The

"Mandakini-born" or "Son of Ganga" is also the Lord with six-faces, of which the sole function of one face is to grant the request of His devotees. He is, therefore, addressed as Shanmukha. "O Lord Shanmukha, the Son of Ganga! You were given as a boon to the Devas! Now, You grant me a boon — that I may not accidentally fall a victim to sex and thus, get lost," is the prayer of the seeker.

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VERSE-35

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விதிகாணும் உடம்பை விடா வினையேன்
கதிகாண மலர்க்கழல் என்று அருள்வாய்
மதிவாணுதல் வள்ளியை அல்லது பின்
துதியா விரதா சுரபூபதியே.

Vithikaanum udambai vidaa vinaiyen,
Gathikaana malark-kazhal enru arulvaai
Mathivaanuthal valliyai allathu pin,
Thuthiyaa virathaa sura bhoopathiye.

Of such Karmas am I, that I cannot get freed from the
Karma-experiencing body,
To attain Mukti, when shall You, Your Lotus-Feet, grant me?
Except Valli, with forehead radiant like the moon,
To praise none else is Your vow, O Lord of Heaven!

"O Lord of Devaloka! O Skanda, Whose vow (divine policy) is to praise no-one except Valli Devi of shining forehead like the (crescent) moon! I am of such (Sanchita) Karmas as cannot get rid of the Karma-experiencing body. When shalt Thou grant me Thine Lotus-Feet that I may attain Liberation?"

Commentary

Now that he has joined his Guru and has the boon from the Lord for not falling into the trap of bewitching women (Verse-34), he is able to concentrate his mind on his Sadhana

without distractions. And with that his aspiration for realising God has started welling up. He is eager to finish the Karmas which brought him back from that Grand Experience to this illusory world-experience --- தாழ்வானவை செய்தன --- (verses 28 to 31). So he prays to the Lord: "O Lord! Who adores none but Valli Devi! I am of such (Sanchita) Karmas as can never get rid of the fate-experiencing body. When shalt Thou grant me Thine Lotus-like Feet that I may attain Liberation or total freedom from all Karmas?" His appeal to the Lord as the adorer of Valli Devi is perhaps to evoke His sympathy by reminding Him of His *Vrata* or noble policy of accepting longing souls, as He did in Her case. It also shows that his aspiration for release from *Samsara* is as intense as that of Valli's longing to marry the Lord.

The prayers of verse-21 and this verse for granting the Feet of the Lord, which is Liberation, are fulfilled in Verse-44.

விதி காணும் உடம்பு -- '*Vidhi Kaanum Udambu*' -- "Karma-experiencing body". This body is a product of Prarabdha Karmas; it is also the experiencer of that Prarabdha; and it also is the exhauster of that Prarabdha. The Prarabdha is a small portion of the Sanchita Karma which is a huge bundle of one's Karmas accumulated over births, which has the potential to cause many more births in the higher or lower species. Hence when the current Prarabdha is finished and the present body is cast off, one does not get liberated; the soul has to take more births to work out the Sanchita Karmas. Those portions of the Sanchita Karmas, which will produce the next and further embodiments, will become their Prarabdha Karma. Those embodiments need not necessarily be that of the human; they can be any of the 84 lakh yonis or species (verse-39) according to the nature of the Karmas, virtuous or vicious/wicked, to be worked out. Thus the Sanchita is the cause of many Prarabdha-experiencing bodies. This is what is meant by விதி காணும்

உடம்பை விடா வினையேன் -- '*Vidhi Kaanum Udambai Vidaa Vinaiyen*' -- "My (*Sanchita*) Karmas are such that there can be no end to the '*Vidhi Kaanaum Udambu*', -- Prarabdha-experiencing bodies, i.e., cycle of birth and death." This is what was referred to as 'உழலுதல்', '*uzhaludhal*' or 'revolving in the cycle of birth and death' in verse-16 and as 'மாவேழ் சனனம்', '*Maavezh sananam*', "Seven great births" in verse-39.

What, then, is the remedy (கதி காண – '*Gathi Kaana'*) for this endless cycle of birth and death? The grant of the Lord's Lotus-Feet (மலர்க் கழல் அருள்வாய்)! When the Lord's Feet are granted, which wipes out all Karmas; or when the Vel reveals Itself, i.e., when *Jnana* or Wisdom dawns, which burns all Karmas—both of which mean the same, then Liberation is attained and all Karmas including the Sanchita Karmas come to a naught in no time. There is no other way to get freed from all Karmas. Otherwise one may have to take several births, keep revolving in the 84 lakh Yonis or species, to finish them.

Karmas are classified into three groups: *Sanchita, Prarabdha, and Agami*. The accumulated effects of actions done in all one's past lives is called the Sanchita Karma, which the Jiva carries with it from birth to birth. Until the Sanchita Karmas are completely exhausted, there is no salvation to the Jiva. A portion of the Sanchita Karmas is taken out and allotted to be worked out in a particular embodiment of the Jiva, which is called the Prarabdha Karma. While the Jiva, thus, works out its Prarabdha Karmas through a given body, it performs fresh actions, creating what are called the Agami Karmas, which are added to its Sanchita Karmas. Thus, it is a vicious cycle ---- Sanchita – Prarabdha – Agami – Sanchita. The Sanchita Karmas of an individual may be compared to a Bank account of a person, of which the Prarabdha Karmas are withdrawals and the Agami Karmas are the deposits. While the present body

works out a certain amount of the Sanchita Karmas known as the Prarabdha and exhausts it, by its present actions it also adds some new Karmas (Agami) to it. Thus, this body is at once a product of Prarabdha and the cause of Agami. While it finishes some part of the Sanchita, it at the same time adds something to it. It would, therefore, appear that the Sanchita will never get exhausted, and it is impossible to get freed from this cycle of transmigration. The question would naturally arise, is there no way out? Ordinarily speaking, it is humanly not possible to get out of this vicious cycle. Hence, the seeker says, "I am of such Karmas that I cannot get rid of this Karma-experiencing body."

Now, the purpose of this body is to undergo the Prarabdha (fruits of past Karmas) and thus exhaust the Sanchita little-by-little. It is not supposed to add fresh Karmas, though ordinarily it is impossible to avoid the same, because of the identification of the Jiva with the body and the consequent idea of doership and enjoyership entertained by it. As an antidote to this, the practice of Karma-Yoga is prescribed. To perform actions as an instrument in the hands of the Lord, without the idea of doership, without expectation of the fruits of actions, by offering the actions and their fruits to the Lord – this is the essence of Karma-Yoga. A proper performance of Karma-Yoga, which itself is difficult enough for the human being, will ensure that the present actions do not produce any fruits, i.e., Agami Karmas. But, even if one were to do this successfully, one would only be able to work out one's past Karmas without adding fresh Karmas to the stock of Sanchita. Even then, one's Sanchita Karmas would be quite sufficient enough to bring some births more. But, scriptures and saints are never tired of saying that the purpose of human life is to attain God-Realisation, not in a future birth, but right now in this birth itself. Swami Sivanandaji Maharaj says: "The goal of life is God-realisation. Attain this in this very birth, nay this very second!" How to do it, is the question.

There is only one way, i.e., "மலர்க் கழல் அருள்வாய்". The Lord should grant His Lotus-Feet, for which is the prayer of the seeker. God, God's Lotus-Feet, Grace, Divine Consciousness, Self, Wisdom, Vel, *Jnana* — all mean the same. The granting of the Lotus-Feet is an outer act symbolic of an inner transformation in one's consciousness. It is the dawn of Wisdom, the fire of Knowledge, which destroys all Karmas to ashes.

The Jiva is a curious mixture of two elements — Purusha and Prakriti; the light of consciousness (Purusha), and the mind, senses, etc (Prakriti). The Purusha is pure consciousness bereft of activity, and Prakriti is activity but without consciousness. In the Jiva, there is a mutual transference of properties of the one with the other, and as a result the consciousness or Jiva (though bereft of activity) feels itself as the doer and enjoyer, while the mind and body which are inert appear to be self-conscious. The Jiva-consciousness may identify itself with the mind and body, and regard itself as the experiencer of past Karmas and creator of new Karmas; or it may identify itself with the pure consciousness or the Self and remain as a witness untouched by the activities of the mind, senses and the three kinds of Karmas. However, as the Jiva has for births been identifying itself with the body, this wrong identification has become almost natural to it, and it has forgotten its true identity.

When the Lord's Feet are granted, when Wisdom dawns, when the Jiva is awakened to its pristine nature of pure consciousness, when God's Grace descends, the Purusha no more identifies itself with Prakriti, and the Jiva is freed from the clutches of Karmas. When and how this happens is, of course, a mystery. God's grace is the only way. An ardent longing, sincere prayer, whole-souled dedication to God is the way. Hence, is the prayer to the Lord to grant His Lotus-Feet, to attain Liberation.

Now, the question is, what happens to one's Prarabdha Karmas that have already begun to work? In the case of an *ordinary man*, the Jiva works out the Prarabdha and at the same time there accrues Agami Karmas; his cycle of birth and death is endless. The *Karma-Yogin* exhausts his Prarabdha, does not create Agami, but leaves his Sanchita untouched. He has to take a few more births to exhaust his Sanchita and attain liberation. But, the *Jnanin*, who has identified himself with pure consciousness, remains untouched by the three kinds of Karmas. He may appear, for the onlookers, to undergo the Prarabdha Karmas, but not so to himself. He who remains as pure Awareness, which body can he regard as his and which as others? This body, which the onlookers would regard as his, is, to him, the same as any other body. Indeed, there would be no bodies or matter, at all, but only consciousness flooding everywhere, as he belongs to a different realm of Reality. Just as when one wakes up from dream, the dream-bank, the bank-balance, credit, debit, and the multifarious transactions of the dream, together with the dream-subject are wound up and transcended into the unitary waking consciousness, even so is the entire phenomenal play of Karmas and the Karma-experiencing subject transcended in God-consciousness. They belong to two different realms of Reality, and the laws obtaining in one realm do not hold good in another.

Lord Skanda killed Surapadman, released the Devas from his tyranny and restored them to their original positions in Devaloka. Hence, He is the Lord of Gods and Indraloka.

Valli Devi shines with a brilliant forehead because of her single-minded devotion to the Lord. From her childhood, she had intense love for Lord Murugan and was ever thinking of Him, His divine Lilas, His glories, etc. Her mind was ever absorbed in the Lord, and she was determined to marry only Lord Skanda. Pleased with her earnest longing to attain Him, Lord Murugan went to the fields where Valli Devi was. He

praised her, tested her, and finally accepted her as His consort. He praised Valli alone because of her total dedication to Him. This was His *Vrata* (divine policy).

Valli Devi represents the Jiva that longs for union with the Lord. The Lord's policy of praising none but Valli Devi indicates that He seeks to help the ardent souls which reject everything and devote themselves solely to God. To that Lord Skanda, is the seeker’s prayer to grant him His Lotus-Feet.

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VERSE-36

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நாதா குமரா நமவென்று அரனார்
ஓதாய் என ஓதியது எப்பொருள் தான்
வேதா முதல் விண்ணவர் சூடுமலர்ப்
பாதா குறமின் பதசேகரனே.

Naathaa kumaraa namavenru aranaar,
Othaai ena othiyathu epporul thaan
Vedaa muthal vinnavar soodumalarp,
Paadaa kuramin pada sekharane.

"Prostrations, O Lord Kumara!" — So saying when Siva, the Great,
Implored You for Upadesa, what secret did You impart?
Brahma and the gods, on their heads, adorn Your Lotus-Feet!
O Lord, Your head You adorn with the huntress' Feet!

"O Lord Skanda! Brahma and other gods adorn their heads with Thy Lotus-Feet, while You adorn Your head with that huntress' (Valli Devi) Feet! 'Lord Kumara, Prostrations to You! (Be gracious to) Instruct Me.' -- So saying, when Lord Siva beseeched You, what was the (Secret) Teaching that You imparted to Him?"

Commentary

After practising Sadhana under the direct guidance of his Guru for quite some time, equipping himself with the boon for freedom from sex (verse-34) and prayer for the grant of the

Lord's Feet to finish off all Karmas (Verse-35), the seeker feels it is time for him to plunge into intense Sadhana and attain Liberation or Moksha. The above-mentioned verses depict the earnest longing and spiritual unrest of his soul to get a total freedom from all Karmas and the bondage of Samsara, for which he feels the need for initiation into the highest type of mystical meditation. So, even as Lord Siva bowed to and sought *Pranava-Upadesa* from Lord Skanda, approaching his Guru and bowing to him with due reverence, the seeker beseeches his Guru to initiate him into the secret of *Pranava* ('OM') or Brahman. Since pure Pranava or 'OM' is considered as the Mantra of the Sannyasins only, it is implied that the Sadhaka seeks initiation into Sannyasa, which will enable him to destroy all his Karmas and attain the Goal of life. OM, Atman and Brahman are identical, says the Mandukya Upanishad.

Why did Lord Siva bow to Lord Skanda and request Him for Upadesa on *Pranava* or 'OM'? The occasion for this is narrated in the Tamil work, '*Skanda Puranam*', as follows: Once, Brahma, with the other gods, went to Mount Kailasa to pay homage to Lord Siva. After paying homage to and taking leave of Siva, they wended their way back through the abode of Lord Skanda. Lord Skanda, as yet a small boy, was playing with the others. Brahma, out of his pride of being the creator, paid no heed and bypassed the Lord (Skanda). Skanda wanted to teach a lesson to him and called him to His presence. Brahma came and bowed to Lord Skanda, and stood before Him with folded hands.

"What work do you do?" asked Lord Skanda.

"Creation," replied Brahma.

"How do you do the work of creation?"

"With the help of the Vedas."

"Do you know the Vedas?"

"Yes."

"If so, chant," said the Lord.

Brahma started chanting the Rig-Veda, beginning with "OM."

"Stop," said the Lord, "do you know the meaning of OM?"

Brahma tried to explain OM, but could not do it satisfactorily. Skanda, thereupon, ordered Brahma to be imprisoned and took over the job of creation upon Himself on the ground that one who does not know full well the meaning of Pranava (Om), which is the source of creation, is not fit to do the work of creation. The gods who had accompanied Brahma went to Lord Siva, reported the matter to Him and prayed for the release of Brahma from his imprisonment. Siva came to Skanda and ordered Him to release Brahma. Though unwilling, for the reason stated above, in obedience to His father's wish, Skanda released Brahma. Brahma and the other Devas realising the greatness of Skanda bowed to Him, placed His Feet on their heads and with His permission left for their respective abodes. Hence the verse says, "O Lord Skanda! Brahma and other gods adorn their heads with Thine Lotus-Feet."*(At a place called* Chinnaalappatti, *which is 7 miles from the town* Dindukkal *in South India, there is a temple for Lord Murugan Who has four faces, like that of Brahma.)*

Incidentally, Siva, keeping Skanda on His lap, enquired of Him as to whether He knew the meaning of OM and if so, to reveal it to Him. Skanda said that the secret of Pranava is not to be told in public but is to be revealed secretly only when approached with an attitude of discipleship. Though Himself the *Svarupa* of OM, and also that Skanda was Himself in another form, yet eager to hear the sweet exposition of OM from the boyish lips of His Son, Siva assumed the attitude of a disciple

and bowed to Him saying, "*Natha! Kumara! Namah*" (Prostrations unto Thee, O Lord, O Kumara), and asked for *Upadesa* or Teaching. Into the willing ears of Siva, Skanda silently gave Upadesa of the meaning of Pranava. Siva was highly pleased to hear the secret exposition from Skanda, since the latter did it exactly as Siva had revealed it to Him earlier. Siva admiringly said, "Yes, You are right; the meaning of Pranava is precisely the same. Even as the Vedas conclude saying `*Subrahmanyom*' and `*Sadaasivom*,' we two are the meaning of Pranava. Those who know its meaning thus, become equal to Me, i.e., attain Me. To know the meaning of the Pranava is the foremost Sadhana for attaining Brahman for those well-versed Sadhus who are settled in their understanding and Sannyasins who are filled with Suddha-Sattva. How can Brahma who is possessed of the pride of his position know the meaning? Even Yogis who have purified themselves of their sins in Dhyana do not know this; only My devotees out of My grace know it. Dear child, since You are verily Myself, You know this mysterious Pranava. Of all Yogis, none but Sage Agastya is fit to know the Pranava. Therefore, give Upadesa of OM to Agastya, who will become your foremost disciple. Let this *Parampara* (lineage) of instruction thus continue."

It is evident from the above that Siva took Upadesa of OM from Skanda not because He knew it not, but to reveal to the world that Skanda was none other than Himself in every respect. The incident also indicates the method of approach and attainment of spiritual wisdom from a Guru. Also, but for Siva's getting the secret revealed from Skanda, a doubt might arise in the minds of people as to whether Skanda knew the meaning of Pranava at all, though he imprisoned Brahma for the ignorance of it. Thus, the Pranava-Upadesa-incident has many secrets hidden in it.

Such a great Lord, who is OM itself, who revealed the secret of Pranava to Siva, should place the Feet of Valli Devi on

His head reveals the simplicity and gracious nature of His and shows that He is eager and seeks to help true devotees. Valli Devi did severe penance to attain the Lord. From her childhood, she was determined to marry the Lord and thought of Him always; nothing else in life interested her. Even then, the Lord tested her devotion pretty well before accepting her. But when He was thoroughly satisfied with the genuineness of her love for Him, He even took delight in placing her Feet on His head. The Lord verily becomes the slave of His true devotees. He gives Himself completely to those who give themselves to Him unreservedly. Such is the graciousness and simplicity of the Lord!

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VERSE-37

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கிரிவாய்விடு விக்ரம வேல் இறையோன்
பரிவாரம் எனும் பதம் மேவலையே
புரிவாய் மனனே பொறையாம் அறிவால்
அரிவாய் அடியோடும் அகந்தையையே.

Girivaai vidu vikrama vel iraiyon,
Parivaaram enum patham mevalaiye
Purivaai manane poraiyaam arivaal,
Arivaai adiyodum akanthaiyaiye.

The Lord, Who threw His mighty Vel on the mountain,
His *Parivaaram* (associate) I am — this status to attain,
Do long for, O mind! With Knowledge called Serenity
Kill the ego, with its root, in its entirety.

"O mind! Sincerely long to attain the status of being a *Parivaaram* (close associate) of the Lord (Velayudhan), Who let go the powerful Vel on the (Krauncha) mountain (as to rend it); and, with the Knowledge called Serenity destroy this ego, together with its root, completely."

Commentary

This is a very complicated verse with deep and mystical import. The words used by Saint Arunagiri are intuitive, philosophically profound and have esoteric significance. Mere lexicon meaning of words will not help much to understand the

true import of the verse. This is a marvelous verse in which he has packed so much of ideas in a dexterous manner.

When the disciple approached his Guru with an earnest longing for liberation and seeks initiation into Sannyasa (verse 36), the Guru, being convinced of his fitness and readiness, initiates him into the Order of Sannyasa. In this process of Sannyasa-initiation, at first a ritual called *Viraja Homa* (fire ceremony) is performed. In this ritual, the individual offers into the fire, to the chanting of appropriate Mantras, everything of his phenomenal personality --- the body, organs of actions, senses of knowledge, prana, mind, ego, etc.. Then the Guru gives him Upadesa on the *Mahavakya*, thus initiates him into *Nirguna* meditation. The Guru tells the student that he is none of those (body, mind, etc.) anymore and that he is pure Consciousness or the Self or Atman or Brahman. He initiates him saying, "*Tat Twam Asi"* --- "Thou Art That (Brahman)". The disciple is instructed to repeat '*Aham Brahma Asmi*' -- 'I am Brahman' and *feel* that he is Brahman by meditating on this Mahavakya. This is the Mantra or formula for his daily meditation. This *Aham Brahma Asmi* is what Arunagiri indicates by *'Iraiyon Parivaaram'*]நான்(இறையோன் பரிவாரம்[.

)நான்(இறையோன் பரிவாரம் --*'Iraiyon Parivaaram'*: '*Parivaaram*' means 'retinue', 'belonging to', 'closely associated with'. '*Iraiyon*' means God. *'(Naan) Iraiyon Parivaaram'* therefore means: I belong to God, i.e., I do not belong to this phenomenal world. The body, senses, etc., belong to the world of matter, to *Prakriti*, all which have been offered in the *Viraja Homa*. But 'I' or the Jiva or the meditating consciousness is not matter, it is a unit of consciousness, an integral part of God, the Infinite Consciousness or Brahman. Therefore, it means, I belong to God, I am part of God, I am (part of) God. So it is to meditate: "I am God', 'I am Brahman',

‘*Aham Brahma Asmi’.* It is like the wave telling: I belong to the ocean, I am part of the ocean, I am (part of) the ocean. When the wave abandons its ‘wave-ness’, i.e., name, form and movement, it is just ocean-water, an integral part of the ocean. Then instead of feeling ‘I am the wave’, it feels ‘I am the ocean’. And it is true.

From another point of view we can look at this இறையோன் பரிவாரம் எனும் பதம் -- ‘*Iraiyon Parivaaram enum padam*’. The instruction is to aspire for the status (பதம் -- ‘*Padam’*) of being an "*Iraiyon Parivaaram*" i.e., ‘belong to the group of devotees of God, or Yogis or Jnanis’. But who is a Devotee of God, or Yogi or Jnani? Not those who call or think themselves to be so, nor those whom the people may call so, but *only those* whom God regards as belonging to Him. Who are they? They are the God-men. They are those who have attained or realised God, who are established in God-Consciousness, in ‘*Aham Brahma Asmi*’. They are called *Jivanmuktas* when they are still alive, and *Videhamuktas* after they shed their bodies. They are the saints and sages; they are the true devotes of God; they are the ‘*Iraiyon parivaaram*’; they are established in ‘*Aham Brahma Asmi*’ or “I am Brahman” Consciousness. There is no difference between them and God. So they are called God-Men. They may be Devotee-saints (Naayanars/Aazhwars) or Yogi-saints or Jnani-saints; they only truly belong to God. And God helps the world through them.

To those true devotees of God, God and God alone is real, God is all-in-all. Their faith in God is a living faith — a faith which can make God look to their bodily needs, a faith which forces God to appear in the needed manner to remove their sufferings and difficulties, a faith which often draws God to appear before them in person to prove their greatness to the ungrateful world.

A study of the lives of saints, especially those of the Sixty-three Nayanar saints and the Azhwar saints of South India will reveal the glory, greatness, and power of such true devotees of God. Gouranga Mahaprabhu, Tulasidas, Ramdas, Jnana-dev, Appar, Sundarar, Jnana-Sambanthar, Sankara, Ramakrishna, Ramana Maharishi, Sivananda, and other Devotees of God (called '*Thondars*', in Tamil) could transform people by their mere presence and look. Their company is so purifying, so inspiring and so transforming that a living contact with them will ensure God-vision, even as iron is transformed into gold by the touch of the philosopher's stone. They really belong to God, they are '*Iraiyon Parivaaram*'. The instruction of the verse is to aspire to belong to this kind of '*Iraiyon parivaaram*'. Such 'Devotees of God' solely engage themselves in the service of God, in His worship, in singing His glories, in repeating His Names, in meditation upon Him, in talking to one another about God and His Lilas; in short, they verily exist for Him and in Him, and nothing other than God exists for them. Only those *Thondars*, Bhaktas, Yogis, Jnanins, Jivanmuktas who have experienced God, are the real "*Parivaaram*" of God. Hence, the holy Tamil work '*Periya-Puraanam'*, which treats of the lives of the Sixty-three Nayanar saints, also goes by the name *Thiruth-Thondar Puraanam.*

The 'Devotees of God' are a category by themselves. They are called *Thondars*, in Tamil. *Thondu* means *Seva* (divine service), and one who has dedicated oneself to the service of God and His devotees is a *Thondar*. Thondars are servants, in the true sense of the term, who regard themselves as slaves of God and His devotees, and who have dedicated themselves to the service of Temples, Ashrams, etc. They devote their whole lifetime in divine service — cleaning the premises of places of worship, attending to the needs of those that visit temples, maintenance of flower-gardens, wells of the temples, etc., and preparation of garlands and sandal-paste for worship in shrine,

etc., etc., all the time immersed in the thought of the Lord. These services they do absolutely voluntarily. They are not employed workers, nor do they restrict their services to a particular temple or place. They keep moving from village-to-village, place-to-place, and do Seva wherever necessary. Though they may be ill-treated by the authorities of the temple and the public because of their untidy appearance which they purposely put on, they keep on doing service. They subject themselves to every kind of humiliation so that there is not the least trace of ego left in them. Thus, the *Thondars* annihilate their ego, by developing serenity through undivided love for God, which draws His grace on them. Their love of God and genuine eagerness to serve His devotees is known only to the Indweller (God). To them, God alone exists, more so in the form of His devotees. Thus the *Thondars* are the true 'Devotees of God' -- *Iriyon Parivaaram*.

Does it mean that we are not devotees of God! We regularly visit the temples, do prayer and Puja at home, read scriptures, attend Satsangas, etc. Of course, we are also devotees of God, but only in a secondary sense. Because, the true devotees of God are established in God, their minds are saturated with the thought of God, no other thought arises in their minds. But in our case, though a part of the day is spent in thought of God, a greater part of the day is spent not only in not thinking of God but in such extraneous thoughts and activities of lust, anger, greed, hatred, hypocrisy, etc., of which we would ourselves be ashamed. We belong more to the world than to God. Ramakrishna Paramahamsa used to compare our mind to the fly that sits on and enjoys sweetmeats for a while and the next moment flies away and sits on filth and relishes it. Would anyone be benefitted by belonging to the group of this kind of secondary devotees! Or is the instruction of the verse to aspire to attain that status!

எனும் பதம் மேவலையே புரிவாய் : "*Enum padam mevalaiye purivaai*". '*Enum padam*' means that state of '*Iraiyon parivaaram*' or '*Aham Brahma Asmi*.' '*Mevalaiye purivaai*' means to meditate and aspire to attain that state, i.e., to try to get oneself established in the consciousness of "*Aham Brahma Asmi*." How? By meditation on that Mahavakya. Because, meditation on "Aham Brahma Asmi" will lead to actual experience or realisation of "Aham Brahma Asmi" — *Advaita Bhavana* leads to *Advaita Avastha*. Intense feeling leads to experience. *Dhyana* or meditation leads to *Samadhi*. 'As you think, so you become.' It is the way of thinking that makes the consciousness either the Jiva or Isvara, man or God, individual or cosmic, bound or liberated. If the principle of awareness in us thinks "I am the body," it verily gets limited to and identified with the body; if it thinks "I am pure consciousness or God or Brahman" it doubtless becomes God, it is Brahman. Hence, when the mind is asked to aspire for the status of being an "*Iraiyon Parivaaram*," it is an instruction to aspire for and attain the status of Brahman by meditation on "*Aham Brahma Asmi*", "I am Brahman." Meditation leads to Realisation; Dhyana leads to Samadhi.

By meditating thus, what happens is explained further in "*Poraiyaam arivaal arivaai adiyodum agandaiyaiye*" – பொறையாம் அறிவால் அரிவாய் அடியோடும் அகந்தையையே --- "By the Knowledge or Awareness or Consciousness which is Serenity or Equanimity or Being, destroy the ego-sense with its root, i.e., Ignorance or *Ariyaamai*."

பொறையாம் அறிவு – '*Poraiyaam Arivu'* : The Guru instructed the seeker to meditate on 'I am Brahman'. But what is Brahman? Or, how to meditate on Brahman? He says, it is '*Poraiyaam Arivu*', i.e., Consciousness-Mass or Infinite Consciousness. In the Upanishad, Brahman or the Absolute is defined as '*Prajnaanam Brahma*' -- 'Consciousness is

Brahman'. It is also one of the *Mahavakyas*. The Tamil work '*Kanda Puraanam*', describing the *Avatara* or Incarnation of Lord Murugan, says 'பிரமமாய் நின்ற சோதிப் பிழம்பு' – '*Piramamaai nindra syotip pizhambu*'– "The Mass of *Jyoti* or Light (Consciousness) which is Brahman." (See KAAPPU Verse). Brahman is 'சோதிப் பிழம்பு' Consciousness-Mass; It is a homogeneous Mass of Consciousness i.e., it is Undivided, it is Indivisible, it is Infinite and it is Absolute Consciousness; other than That, nothing else is or nothing else can be. Arunagiri refers to this Consciousness-Mass as பொறையாம் அறிவு -- '*Poraiyaam Arivu*'. '*Arivu*' is Knowledge or Consciousness (*Chit or Prajna*). '*Porai*' means 'settled' or 'calm' or 'serene' which means Infinite and Indivisible Mass. So "*Poraiyaam Arivu*" means "Consciousness-Mass" or 'Consciousness-Being' (*Chit-Svaroopa*), and not 'moving' or 'agitated' or 'limited' or 'Becoming' (*Vilaasa*). Hence, '*Poraiyaam Arivu*' is Serene-Consciousness or Consciousness-Being (*Chit-swaroopa*) which is Brahman. This is just the opposite of everything of the phenomenal world wherein everything is finite, limited, changing, moving and perishable, i.e., 'becoming'. They are called Consciousness-becoming or Consciousness-play (*Chit-vilaasa*) which is the phenomenal world. Brahman is 'Being' while the world is 'Becoming'; Brahman is Eternal or Unchanging (Absolute), while the world is changing or relative (finite). So when he is asked to meditate on 'I am Brahman', it is to meditate on 'பொறையாம் அறிவு' i.e., 'I am a Mass of Consciousness, infinite and indivisible in nature'. 'பொறையாம் அறிவு', 'சோதிப் பிழம்பு', and '*Prajnaanam Brahma*' -- 'Consciousness is Brahman' --- all mean the same thing.

When this meditation on "Aham Brahma Asmi" as 'I am a Mass of Consciousness' is practised by the initiated and well-prepared mind, it settles itself in its substratum, the Indivisible Mass of Consciousness which is called Serenity or 'Being'

(*Poraiyaam Arivu*), by losing its condition of ego-sense or Jivatva or individuality-consciousness, which is "becoming." Just as when a wave-crest subsides, it becomes one with the calm waters of the ocean, the ego-wave of Jiva subsides in the Consciousness-Mass (Brahman), losing its individuality. This Knowledge or Realisation of "I am Brahman" or "I am indivisible Consciousness-Mass" is, therefore, a death-blow not only to the ego (individuality-consciousness) but also to its cause, *Avidya.* Because, there is no place for darkness (Avidya) in that Indivisible Mass of Consciousness or Light. Hence, is the instruction to "destroy the ego with its root" (*arivaai adiyodum agandaiyaiye*) by meditation on "*Poraiyaam arivaal"* i.e., "*Aham Brahma Asmi*." Light does not admit of darkness; Consciousness-Mass does not admit of Avidya. In Light, darkness cannot exist. Even so, in Consciousness-Mass Avidya cannot exist. Meditation on and establishment in the Absolute is the only way to annihilate the ego and its root, Avidya.

Earlier, in verse-28, the aspirant touched the fringe of Cosmic-Consciousness in his meditation, in which his ego was only swallowed up but remained intact. So, he had to return to this illusory world of Maya, as his Avidya, the root-cause of ego, was not destroyed (*Ariyaamai poruththilai*) (verses 29); and unless Avidya is removed, realisation is not possible. Here is, therefore, the instruction to destroy the ego-sense with its root '*Arivaai adiyodum agandaiyai*'.

Initiation into Sannyasa itself is not the attainment of the Goal or *Anubhuti* or God-Realisation; it is only a final preparation for it. Now, with this initiation and instruction, the disciple is fully equipped to leap into the Absolute. He has to do intense meditation on "*Aham Brahma Asmi*", as a Consciousness-Mass, and get established in Brahman or Samadhi. This is evident from the Guru's instruction, following

the initiation, to destroy ego with its cause (Avidya) by the knowledge of one's true identity.

The verbal instruction given by the Guru to the Seeker in the very initial stage of his Sadhana that he is not the body which gave him a theoretical understanding that he is the Self or Atman (*Meipporul pesiyavaa*) (Verse-8) is now brought into actual practice or given a concrete shape in the form of Initiation into Sannyasa and instruction to meditate on 'Aham Brahma Asmi'.

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VERSE-38

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ஆதாளியை ஒன்றறியேனை அறத்
தீதாளியை ஆண்டது செப்புமதோ
கூதாள கிராத குலிக்கிறைவா
வேதாள கணம் புகழ் வேலவனே.

Aathaaliyai onrariyenai arat ,
Theethaaliyai aandathu cheppumatho
Koothaala kiraatha kulikkiraivaa,
Vethaala ganam pugazh velavane.

Boastful, knowing nothing, and still worse,
Evil-natured,—such me, You 'accepted'; what to say of this!
O Kudhala-Garlanded! O Lord of the huntress!
O Lord Velayudha, hymned by ghosts countless!

"O Lord Velayudha! Who wears garlands of Kudhala flowers! Who is the Consort of the maiden (Valli) of the hunter caste! Who is praised by groups and groups of ghosts! O Lord, I am boastful, a fool who knows nothing and full of evil nature. Yet Thou 'accepted' me (and made me Thine). What to say (of this gracious act of Thine)!"

Commentary

The disciple is overwhelmed by the most gracious act of the Guru in accepting him and initiating him into the Order of Sannyasa. He has no words to express his gratitude. Because, he knows what he was before he took to the spiritual practices,

how the Guru helped him at every stage of difficulty from the very beginning and finally what his condition was before his initiation (Verse-31 – தாழ்வானவை செய்தது). Perhaps he had glimpses of what horrible Karmas are in store, in his Sanchita–bundle, because of which he called himself '*arath-thiithaali*' அறத் தீதாளி – terribly evil-natured fellow. Remembering all this, he exclaims: "Though I am vainglorious, knowing nothing worthwhile and full of evil nature, You have 'accepted and transformed' me! What to speak of your graciousness!"

The power of the rituals, the Mantras chanted and the energy transmitted by the Guru with the *Mahavakya* Upadesa '*Tat Twam Asi*', at the time of initiation into Sannyasa, are so uplifting that they bring about a total inner transformation in him. And finally when he receives the ochre robes from his Guru, it makes even a really fit student feel whether he is worthy of it. It is something like the feeling of even the tallest person standing in front of a huge mountain, as a pigmy. So on receiving the robes, he falls flat at the Feet of the Guru, the Great Master, the mountain of Spiritual Wisdom and Bliss, in utter humility and expresses his heartfelt gratitude: "Master, Lord! You have 'accepted and transformed' me into gold, the iron that I was -- a vainglorious person, knowing nothing worthwhile and full of evil nature. I am dumb-founded!" This is the honest feeling of almost every one when he enters the Holy Order. And, how many are fortunate to get this chance; not even one in several millions! The glory of the Order is indescribable. Hence saint Tiruvalluvar said: துறந்தார் பெருமை துணைகூறின் வையத்து இறந்தாரை எண்ணிக் கொண்டற்று -- 'To comprehend the extent of the glory of the renunciate, would be like counting the number of the dead in the world'. (Kural 3-2).

To be accepted, initiated into Sannyasa and be instructed upon the *Mahavakha* by a Guru and thus be reminded of one's true identity (verse 37) is of momentous importance to the

Sadhaka. He wonders over his fortune and tenders his silent and heart-felt gratitude to his Guru (God) for His mercy and compassion. Though the Guru gives such initiation only to the fit disciples, no Sadhaka can claim or feel to be really fit enough for this initiation; and even in the case of the rarely fit ones, they know that their fitness is due to the grace of the Guru showered upon them and the preparation made by him, earlier. The Sadhaka, therefore, exclaims and wonders over the rare blessing conferred upon him.

Kudhala is a kind of plant that grows in hilly regions. Its flowers have neither good odor nor beauty. The Lord wears a garland of those flowers. This shows the simplicity of the Lord and His gracious nature in accepting things which are worthless. Valli Devi was brought up by the hunters, who are very cruel by nature. The Lord went in search of her and accepted her of His own accord. This again shows His generous nature. In the battle with Surapadman and his army, countless Asura-warriors were killed by the Lord's Vel. The ghosts had a nice feast of the heaps and heaps of dead bodies of the Asuras killed by the Lord; and in their joy, they shouted, danced, sang, and glorified the Lord. The Lord enjoyed their songs and praises. What kindness and simplicity of the Lord! He who rejoices in listening to the Veda-Mantras chanted to *Svara* (proper accent) by gods, Munis, saints and devotees, also listened patiently to the chaotic shouts of the devils. All these indicate the kindness and nobility of the Lord in accepting even the meanest of things.

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VERSE-39

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மாவேழ் சனனம்கெட மாயைவிடா
மூவேடணை என்று முடிந்திடுமோ
கோவே குறமின்கொடி தோள்புணரும்
தேவே சிவசங்கர தேசிகனே.

Maa-vezh sananam keda maayai vidaa,
Moo-vedanai enru mudinthidumo
Kove kuramin-kodi thol punarum,
Theve sivasankara thesikane.

For the seven great births to come to a close,
When shall the three Eshanas, inseparable from Maya, cease?
O King! O Embracer of Valli, the tender huntress!
O Great Guru of Sankara, of form auspicious!

"O King (of the universe)! O Lord, Who embraces the lightning-like huntress, Valli Devi! O Guru of Sivasankara! In order to put an end to the seven (categories of) great births, when will the three Eshanas (basic desires), which are inseparable from Maya, come to an end?"

Commentary

Having equipped himself with all that is necessary for a leap into the Absolute, the seeker now aspires to realise God at the earliest. He embarks on his Sadhana, as instructed by his Guru, with a resolute and all-out effort to break the bonds of the causal chain and experience God. As the aspiration wells up in

his heart, he first offers a prayer to the Lord (*Bhakti*) in this verse before he starts his uninterrupted meditation on the Absolute (*Jnana*) in the next verse. Bhakti and Jnana go hand in hand from the very beginning and gradually they get merged into one another. He prays: "O Lord! Who embraced the lightning-like huntress (Valli Devi)! O Guru of Sivasankara! When will the three *Eshanas* (basic cravings), which are inseparable from Maya, come to an end, so that I will be free from the seven great kinds of births?"

This Maya is mysterious and indescribable. On the one side it is inseparable from the basic desires (*Eshanas*) in the individual, forcing him to perform desire-motivated Karmas, and on the other side it provides the field of this phenomenal universe to work out those Karmas in the seven great (categories) species of births into which the individual souls are born. This field of the phenomenal universe is termed as 'house' in the next verse, in which the deluded souls keep roaming.

The three *Eshanas* or basic cravings are desire for wealth/property/possessions, desire for family and children, and desire for name and fame in this world and joys of the heavens. These are inseparable from the causal body which is Avidya or *Ariyamai* or Ignorance or Maya. They are the cause of births in the seven kinds of *Yonis* or species --- gods, humans, animals, birds, insects, aquatics and plants, -- which are part of the phenomenal universe, the 'house' of Maya. Hence the prayer for their total destruction.

This verse can be said to be a more detailed exposition of verse-16. '*Peraasai*' of verse-16 is the 'three *Eshanas*' here; and '*uzhaluthal*' there, is '*Maavezh sananam*' here. (This has also reference to verse-35: *Vidhikaanum*…..)

Family and home have been renounced. Sannyasa has been taken. Mahavakya Upadesa has been obtained (verse 37). Only the last vesture of Maya in its *causal form*, i.e., the condition where the three Eshanas are inseparable from it, remains to be rent asunder. The Sadhaka is now pining to get rid of this also. This extreme longing to be freed from Samsara is a precursor to the final stroke of Sadhana which he is to undertake (as would be seen in the next verse), before which he offers an invoking prayer to the Lord to take him into His possession, even as He embraced Valli, accepted her and made her His own.

The cycle of birth and death is endless. The Jiva (soul) goes on taking birth after birth in different species, according to its desires and Karmas, and this cycle never ceases until it is totally free from all desires. It is said that there are 84 lakh (*Yonis*) species, and the soul finally attains a human birth, which is the door-way to salvation. Though there are 84 lakh Yonis (species), they are brought under seven categories viz., plants, aquatic creatures, reptiles, birds, animals, human beings, and Devas (gods). These seven kinds of birth or Yonis are referred to as "great," because in each kind there is innumerable variety or variation. The 84 lakh Yonis are said to be distributed among these seven kinds, as follows: 1. Devas: 14 lakh Yonis, 2. Human beings: 9 lakhs, 3. Animals: 10 lakhs, 4. Birds: 10 lakhs, 5. Reptiles: 11 lakhs, 6. Aquatic creatures: 10 lakhs, and 7. Plants: 20 lakhs.

These seven great births are within the domain of Maya. If one is to be free from births and deaths, the three Eshanas should cease. The three Eshanas constitute the essence of Maya; they are so inseparable from Maya that they are themselves verily Maya. To be free from the Eshanas is to be free from Maya. Eshana means desire. It is not desire in its gross form for this or that object, but is the basic craving or urge of the soul for externalisation. Though desires are countless in number, they

are boiled down to basically three. These three Eshanas are the cause for the birth of the Jiva in the different wombs — the seven great births. Unless these desires are given up, there is no scope for freedom from birth and death.

The three Eshanas are: (1) *Arthaishana* or *Vittaishana*, (2) *Putraishana* or *Daaraishana*, and (3) *Lokaishana*. (1) *Arthaishana* is the desire for wealth, property, etc. One thinks that if he possesses great wealth, he can command all things and enjoy life here in its full measure. So, people crave for riches. (2) *Putraishana* is the desire for wife and children, particularly males. It is desire for happiness here and hereafter. (3) *Lokaishana* is the desire for name and fame in the world, and also for the joys of the heavens. One wishes to be the most prominent person in his place (country), in his field of activity (art, games, etc.) and even in the religious and spiritual fields — one wishes to be widely known and revered. In short, wherever one is or whatever one does or however one is, one wishes to be prominent and well-known. In the Tamil language the three Eshanas are known as: மண்ணாசை, பெண்ணாசை and பொன்னாசை.

These Eshanas are the obstacles for the attainment of liberation, though they may bring happiness here and take one to heaven, etc. They may be called the knots of the heart, the root of Samsara, most difficult to be broken. They limit the consciousness, which is otherwise universal, to a particular body or realm of experience. But for the desires, who would not attain liberation? While, thus, the desires are the direct obstacles to *Anubhuti* — Realisation or Experience of the Absolute — Lord's Grace is the direct means to attain *Anubhuti*. The seeker, therefore, invokes the grace of the Lord, for an early destruction of the three Eshanas, addressing Him in three ways as, "O King of the Universe," "O Lord who embraced Valli Devi," and "O Guru of Sivasankara."

If the citizens of a country have any problem, they have naturally to approach the king of that country for their redress. Even so, the seeker resorts to the Lord, who is the "King of the Universe," for the removal of the Eshanas.

Lord Skanda went to the fields where Valli Devi was, embraced her, and finally accepted her as His Consort, by which He released her, forever, from the control of the cruel hunters. Similarly, if the Lord's grace envelops the Jiva, the latter can be freed from the grip of the Eshanas. Hence, he invokes the Lord's grace by addressing Him as the "Embracer of the lightning-like hunter-fostered Valli Devi."

Again, when Guru's grace comes in its full measure, one's true identity with the Lord is firmly established. Therefore, the Lord is referred to as "the Guru Supreme of Lord Siva."

In the beginning of Sadhana, Maya troubles the seeker in the form of gross, individual objects such as wife, children, wealth, etc. — as the many things, external to him. This was the condition portrayed in verse 5, where the Sadhaka is in the beginning stages of his journey to the Immortal. But, after due initiation by the Guru into the techniques of meditation and after having a glimpse of Cosmic Consciousness, Maya becomes an indescribable one, "*Illeyenum Mayai*" — Maya which is said to be non-existent. Though it is experienced as the visible world, it is nullified in the cosmic awareness; and yet, one has to live in and experience it, though with a transformed vision, which gives him the conviction that it is, after all, perishable — "*Padu Mayai.*" Then, it is not the individual objects outside but the world as such that is Maya. By world, one's own body is also included which is also nullified in meditation, though experienced at other times. But in this verse, Maya extends to the whole of creation, i.e., the seven kinds of birth into which are distributed the 84 lakh Yonis, which are

only heard of but not visible — yet located in the heart as the Eshanas (basic cravings). How strange is this Maya!

In its grossest form, Maya is regarded as the isolated objects and also external to the seeker — limited and away. In its subtle form, from individual objects it extends to the world on the one side, and on the other from external objects it reaches his own body — more extensive and closer. In its causal form, from the objects and world, it extends to the whole of creation on the one side, while it recedes within the seeker himself and lodges itself as the Eshanas in his heart — most extensive and closest. This is the mystery of Maya.

Hence, though rejection of external objects (gross condition) is good, that alone will not do. Though negation of the world and body in meditation is higher (subtle condition), this is also not enough. The seven great births have to cease by the destruction of the heart's cravings or Eshanas (causal state), if liberation is to be attained. How pithily does Arunagirinathar convey subtle secrets!

A doubt may arise that the 3 Eshanas have already been given up at the time of taking Sannyasa. Why then does he now seek to destroy them again? The 3 Eshanas renounced at the time of taking Sannyasa are the gross and subtle forms of desires. What is sought to be destroyed now is the causal condition of the Eshanas, in which condition even the 3 Eshanas are themselves not distinguishable one from the other, and also they are identical with, inseparable and indistinguishable from Maya. If the causal condition of the three Eshanas (which is identical with Maya) were to be destroyed on taking Sannyasa itself, then the disciple would have attained God-Realisation then and there, and there would have been no need for the Guru to instruct him to do meditation on '*Aham Brahma Asmi*' and destroy ego to its root, i.e., Avidya (Verse-37) or the causal condition of Maya.

The three Eshanas, which are inseparable from Maya, referred to in this verse denote their causal condition, for it is the cause of "seven great births." This causal condition of Maya may be said to be the "*Mahamaya*", which the Lord alone is capable of destroying, (*Mahamaayai kalainthida valla Piraan*) mentioned in the earlier part of verse 5. This causal condition is to be differentiated from the "*Jaganmaya*" constituted of "home, wealth and women" (*Ahamaadi Madanthaiyar*) referred to in the latter part of verse 5, which is its gross condition; as also from the "*Illeyenum Mayai*" (verse 29) and the "*Padu Mayai*" (verse 31), which are its subtle conditions. Here, the aspirant acutely longs for the grace of the Lord for the removal of the *Mahamaya* or the causal condition of the three Eshanas.

The desperate cry of the soul which longs for a final release from the grip of the three Eshanas is echoed in this verse. A close and deep study of the verse would seem to reveal the following secret: "My soul is gripped by the three Eshanas. As you embraced Valli, if You, O Lord, come and embrace my soul, only then can I be freed from the grip of the Eshanas and be liberated from births and deaths. O Lord, when shall You be pleased to do this? There is no other means. So, pray condescend to do soon." The Lord's Maya, which is constituted of the three Eshanas and which scorches the Jiva in the seven kinds of births, can be overcome by the Lord's grace only. "Verily, this divine illusion of Mine (Maya), made up of the (three) *Gunas* (Qualities of Nature -- *Sattva, Rajas and Tamas*) is difficult to cross over; those who take refuge in Me alone, cross over this illusion," says Lord Krishna in the Bhagavad Gita (VII-14).

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VERSE-40

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வினை ஓடவிடும் கதிர்வேல் மறவேன்
மனையோடு தியங்கி மயங்கிடவோ
சுனையோடு அருவித் துறையோடு பசும்
தினையோடு இதணோடு திரிந்தவனே.

Vinai odavidum kathir vel maraven,
Manaiyodu thiyangi mayangidavo
Sunaiyodu aruvit thuraiyodu pasum,
Thinaiyodu ithanodu thirinthavane.

Karma-dispelling Luminous-Vel, I shall not forget;
Perplexed and deluded will I be, by this life transient?
The spring, the waterfall and the fields of millet, —
O Lord, Who wandered amongst these, as also the watch-loft?

"O Lord! Who (in search of Valli) wandered about the (mountain) spring, the banks of the waterfall, the millet field, and the watcher-loft! I shall not forget the Luminous-Vel that dispels (the darkness of) Karmas. Should I remain perplexed and deluded by this phenomenal life? (No, it cannot be!)"

Commentary

வினை ஓடவிடும் கதிர்வேல் மறவேன் -- "*Vinai odavidum kathir vel maraven"* -- "I shall not forget the Karma-dispelling Vel.": After offering prayers to the Lord for freedom from the three *Eshanas* which are inseparable from Maya (Verse-39), the Sannyasin-disciple undertakes uninterrupted

meditation on the Luminous-Vel (*Jnana-Vel*) or the Self or Pure Consciousness, which is meditation on '*Aham Brahma Asmi*' as initiated and instructed by his Guru (Verse-37). Only Knowledge or *Jnana* can destroy Karmas -- '*Jnanaagnih Sarva Karmaani Bhasmasaat kurute tathaa*' says the Bhagavad Gita (IV-37). Very aptly Arunagiri says '*Vinai odavidum Kadir-Vel'* meaning the 'Luminous-Vel which drives away (destroys) Karmas'. Because, it is the horrible Karmas (*Thaazhvaanavai seithana* -- தாழ்வானவை செய்தன – verse-31) that brought him back from that near Cosmic Consciousness experience (verse-28) to this phenomenal world experience of Maya (Verse-29). Hence to finish those Karmas he undertakes non-stop meditation on the Karma-dispelling Luminous Vel or *Jnana-Vel*. In '*maraven*' (மறவேன்) or 'I shall not forget' is implied his determination, like Lord Buddha, to continue unceasing meditation until he realises God.

The *Vel* is Pure Consciousness or Brahman. Swami Sivananda says in his book '*Lord Shanmukha and His worship'*: "As the aspirant advances in the practice of meditation, he can gradually dispense with all the paraphernalia and concentrate upon the *Vel* alone. This *Vel* is the real *Svarupa* of Lord Subrahmanya. It represents Consciousness. When all the rest has vanished, this alone remains behind. One who meditates on this *Vel* as Consciousness surely attains the Supreme Brahman which is Satchidananda."

'மனையோடு தியங்கி மயங்கிடவோ' – *Manaiyodu thiyangi mayangidavo*. 'Shall I remain caught up and deluded by this phenomenal life?' In the question-like statement, the answer 'no' is implied. This is the usual way of expression. As he has undertaken unbroken meditation on '*Aham Brahma Asmi*' till Realisation, he is sure that he will go beyond Maya.

"*Manai*" means house, i.e., a place of residence. People live in houses. A house has various sections, such as the portico

in the front portion, the drawing room, the bedroom, the kitchen, the dining hall, the bath room, the terrace, the basement, the back-yard, the garden with trees and well, etc., etc. — all within a big compound wall. One moves within the house from one area to another as needed. In whichever portion of the house one might be, one is still within the boundaries of the house. This is so far as the body is concerned. But, for the soul or Jiva, the "*Manai*" (house) is the entire domain of Maya which, as seen in the previous verse, comprises of the seven great births, in 84 lakhs of Yonis or species, in different *Lokas* or realms. Jivas might take birth in any of these realms according to their Karmas. In whichever realm the soul might be, it is still within the domain of Maya. The whole of creation projected by Maya is the "*Manai*" (place of residence) for the soul, which it has to overstep in order to attain God. This is done by meditation on the Vel (or Self). So, the determined meditation undertaken by the Sannyasin-disciple gives him supreme confidence that Samsara or the play of Maya cannot delude him. He feels certain that he shall burn all Karmas, get Liberation and be free from transmigration once and for ever. Then, the phenomenal life would look like a dream or appear as a mere play, even as it was a *Lila* or divine play for the Lord to search for Valli in the millet-field and other places.

This is a unique verse which reveals the true significance and the real glory of the Vel. The Vel is not merely the divine weapon of Lord Skanda that killed the Asuras, as is usually conceived of and referred to, but is also the Supreme Object of meditation itself, i.e., it is identical with the Absolute. In the previous verse, the soul's longing for freedom from the three Eshanas was echoed. It is now expressed as constant thinking of or meditation upon the Vel. What is the Vel and what is its power? Just as the sun dispels darkness without any effort by its mere shining, the Vel, by its very nature, drives off or destroys Karmas. Significantly, the Vel, in this verse, is referred to as the

"*Kadir-Vel*" — the Vel which is of the form of Luminous Light — which is otherwise known as *Jnana-Vel* (Wisdom Vel).

"I shall not forget the Luminous Vel that dispels Karmas." The Vel symbolises Pure consciousness, which is the Self (Brahman). Non-forgetfulness of the Vel, therefore, means an effort at establishment in the awareness of the Self, which naturally will dispel all Karmas. Karmas, virtuous or otherwise, are due to desires. Prompted by desires, man performs Karmas. Why does one engage oneself in activity of any kind? It is desire that goads one to activity, to get something, to achieve something that is unachieved. Why is there desire? Because of ignorance of the real nature of things, and also because of ignorance (Avidya) of one's own essential nature. To think that one is the body or mind, and to strive to possess things and enjoy them for getting happiness, is due to ignorance of one's essential nature, or the Self. The Self, which one really is, is Immortal and Eternal, Bliss and Peace, Wisdom and Infinite Power. Not to forget this, i.e., to be rooted in this awareness, will remove ignorance. This Self is the Vel that can destroy ignorance, as the sun removes darkness. When ignorance is, thus, removed by an awareness of the Self or Vel, desires cease and with them Karmas, too. Ignorance is not a positive or real thing, even as darkness is not; it is only the absence of Wisdom, just as darkness is only the absence of light. When light comes, darkness vanishes automatically and no effort is necessary to remove it. So also, when Wisdom dawns, when a perpetual awareness of the Self is maintained, ignorance vanishes. So, to break the chain of Karma, which is the effect of desire and ignorance (Avidya, Kama, and Karma — the three knots of the heart that bind the soul to Samsara or phenomenal existence), non-forgetfulness of the Vel or a perpetual awareness of one's essential nature is the only means. When the thinking principle in man, which ultimately is consciousness itself, thinks of the Vel or Consciousness, i.e. Itself, it is severed from its

connections with the mind and senses, and at once these cease functioning, as a huge machine comes to a standstill when the power is withdrawn from it. Thus, consciousness resting in consciousness immediately puts an end to Karmas. Hence, he says, "Never shall I forget the Light-Vel, which drives off Karmas. Therefore, no more shall I be subject to Samsara." Ceaseless remembrance of the Vel (or trying to be rooted in the awareness of the Self), frees one from the shackles of Karma and liberates one from the effects of Samsara. Here, the meditation reaches its zenith and culminating point, where the meditation is on the Absolute or Satchidananda, as pure Consciousness — the Vel.

Now, what happens to the phenomenal life when one, thus, tries to be rooted in the awareness of the omnipresence of the Self or in the ceaseless remembrance of the Vel? The world will be there, but not as before. To such a one the world may appear to be there, and he may also appear to be subject to the vicissitudes of life. But, to himself, it is all a mere joke, a play. Even as Maya is not a binding factor to the Lord, so becomes Samsara to him. Nothing affects him anymore. He may carry on his usual activities as before, apparently in the same manner; but, because of this peculiar awareness, he carries on those activities without being affected by them, without delusion or agitation, as he is ever conscious of the unchanging Reality in which he is trying to be rooted. How beautifully is this fact brought in this verse when he says that Lord Skanda went in search of Valli to the millet-field, etc.?

Valli used to stand on a loft in the midst of the millet-fields and drive off the birds that came to peck the corn. Sometimes, she would go to the nearby mountain-spring to drink water, or to the waterfall for a bath. But all this she did during the day, and well before sunset she would return to her home in the adjoining village. The Lord knew all this. But, He would still go to those places in the evening, after she had left for her home,

and search for her in those places. Knowingly, why did the Lord do so? It was a joy for Him, a *Lila*, an act of grace! Not only that; He would not be disappointed for not meeting her, because even before leaving for those places, He knew that she would not be there; on the other hand, it was a joy to search for her. The outward act of the Lord in searching for Valli was like that of any other lover for his beloved, but the mental attitude was quite different, which makes all the difference. Even so, one who is trying to be fixed in the awareness of the Omnipresence of the Lord, does all actions as anyone else would do and he may appear to be suffering and tied down to Samsara, but it is all meaningless for him. He knows that the Self is the sole Reality and the world is essence-less. Nothing affects him anymore, even as the Lord was not disappointed.

In this verse, the soul is not fully established in Brahman-consciousness, but is trying to fix itself in It by ceaseless meditation. Even this, gives it the conviction that it will go beyond the domain or limits of Maya and so it exclaims, "Am I to be caught up or deluded by the different realms of Maya (i.e. `*Manai*'), when my meditation on Brahman is unremitting? No, phenomenality cannot affect me."

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VERSE-41

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சாகாது எனையே சரணங்களிலே
காகா நமனார் கலகம் செயுநாள்
வாகா முருகா மயில் வாகனனே
யோகா சிவஞான உபதேசிகனே.

Saagaathu enaiye saranangkalile,
Kaakaa namanaar kalakam cheyunaal
Vaakaa murugaa mayil vaaganane
Yogaa siva jnaana upathesikane.

Save me from transmigration and, under Your Lotus Feet,
Protect, Protect, when Yama does his mischief,
O Victory-garlanded! O Muruga! O Peacock-Rider!
O Lord of Yoga! O Guru Supreme, the Siva-Jnana Bestower!

"O Lord! wearing beautiful victory-garlands! O Lord Muruga! O Peacock-Rider! O Lord of Yoga! O Supreme Guru who grants Siva-Jnana (Brahma-Jnana)! Protect me (*here*) and protect me (*now*) under Thine Lotus-Feet and thereby save me from transmigration when Yama does his mischief (of separating the soul from the body)."

Commentary

The Sannyasin-disciple undertook uninterrupted meditation on the Vel to attain Liberation, thereby freedom from phenomenal life or future births (verse-40) (*Jnana*). That aspiration of his is fortified and confirmed and clarified in this

verse by a prayer (*Bhakti*). He wants immediate Realisation of God and not to wait till the body dies, to attain God. He has so much advanced in his meditation due to his determined and intense practice that he feels very close to Realisation, so much so that he wants to be granted *Jivanmukti*, i.e. Liberation *here* and *now*, while still living in this body, to ensure no more births. He is aware that one day Yama will come and do his duty and he is not afraid of that, which is clear from '*Namanaar kalagam seyunaal*', because he knows physical death cannot be avoided by anyone, not even the Avataras, as it is against the law of Nature.

Liberation *here* and *now* (Jivanmukti) does not mean liberation at some particular 'place' or 'time'. It is to go beyond the limitations of time and space. It is God-Realisation while the body is still alive, and to live with an awareness of omnipresence and omniscience. Swami Sivananda says: "The Yogi has simultaneous knowledge. The past and future are blended into the present. Everything is 'now'. Everything is 'here'. He has transcended time and space."

சரணங்களிலே கா கா -- "*Saranangkalile Kaa Kaa*" -- "Protect me, protect me under Your Feet." '*Kaa*' means 'protect'. Protect is said twice to show his intense longing for *immediate Liberation* while still living in this body, and not wait till the death of the body. It is **not** an urgent call for protection from Yama as if Yama has come or is about to come; his coming is still far away which is clear from '*kalagam seyum naal*' – 'that day when Yama will play his mischief'. The prayer is, therefore, not for saving from death or Yama, but for Immediate Liberation and consequent freedom from rebirth ('*saagaathu*' சாகாது(. Yama's coming and doing his mischief of separating the soul from the body is certain and unavoidable for everyone; anything that is born has to perish, even Avataras and sages had to shed their bodies. So, '*saagaathu*' is not freedom from death of this physical body, but from rebirth.

When a person dies, Yama separates the soul from the body but he cannot touch the soul if it is already Liberated or 'protected under the Lord's Feet'. Only the souls that are not Liberated or so protected can he take and allot the next birth according to their Karmas. It is the soul that departs and is reborn, not the body. Thus it is called 'death' (சாதல்(when it entails rebirth or transmigration for the soul, and non-death (சாகாது) when no rebirth is involved. In the case of Liberated souls or saints and sages there is no more birth, no transmigration, and so no death either (சாகாது(. Hence, when they shed the body, they are not said to have died, but attained 'Immortality' (அமரர் ஆனார்(and if they are Sannyasins, it is said, 'he has attained Mahasamadhi'. Thus the prayer of the verse is: "At that time whenever Yama does his mischief (of separating the soul from the body))நமனார் கலகம் செயுநாள்(, in order that he may not take possession of my soul and ordain rebirth, (சாகாது) i.e.there may not be a need for transmigration or rebirth; under Your Feet (சரணங்களிலே(protect me *here*)எனை **கா**(and protect me *now*)**கா**(." (இங்கேயே இப்பொழுதே சரணங்களிலே காப்பாற்று(.

The prayer of this verse is a little different from that of Verse-10 which was to protect him from Yama **if** he comes, as he did not want to die before attaining the Goal. Here it is for Immediate Liberation; let Yama come when he has to.

The prayer for the Grant of the Feet in verses 21 and 35 was also for Liberation before death, in this birth itself, but at that time the Liberation was far away. But now it is just at hand, so he prays **கா**, **கா**, -- *'kaa', 'kaa'*, meaning immediate Realisation. Significantly the prayer is addressed to the Lord as 'the Peacock-Rider' that He may come quickly, and as 'the granter of Yoga and Siva-jnana or Brahma-jnana' that He may grant it at once. And the Lord is pleased to come and grant his

prayer **immediately**, in the next **three consecutive verses**. Granting of the *Vel* (verse-42), *Pesaa Anubhuti* (verse-43), and *His Feet* (verse-44) -- they all mean one and the same thing i.e. Liberation here and now, which is *Jivanmukti*. Thrice Blessed is that soul!!!

That determined effort at establishment in the Vel-consciousness or *'Aham Brahma Asmi'* (verse 40), has removed the fear of death and the Sannyasin-disciple now laughs, as it were, at death, because he knows that Yama will merely do his duty of separating the soul from the body, i.e., the body will disintegrate on exhaustion of the Prarabdha Karmas, which is but a natural process, and ere before that he will be liberated.

The purpose of "*Aham Brahma Asmi*" meditation is to attain God before shedding the body. The disciple who has taken to an uninterrupted thinking of the Vel, or meditation on "*Aham Brahma Asmi*" (verse 40), therefore, not only continues that meditation, but also intensely longs for immediate protection under the Lord's Feet, i.e., establishment in that awareness, which is liberation here and now — *Jivanmukti* — and thereby, be freed from transmigration for ever and ever.

The Lord's Feet and the Vel-consciousness mean one and the same thing. The Feet are not a limited object but the Object of Attainment, even as the Vel is, and they represent '*Parama-padam*' or the Supreme Abode of Omnipresence (as we shall see in verse 44). Hence, to grant (protection under) the Feet or Vel-consciousness means liberation or Jivanmukti. While the Feet are regarded as visible outside and placed on one's head, the Vel represents an inner state of consciousness and is revealed within, in the aspirant's heart. Thus, while the one is an external act, the other is an inner revelation, but both denoting the same thing. The prayer of this verse to grant (protection under) the Feet is, therefore, a prayer to reveal the Vel-

Consciousness, to establish in which was the Sadhaka's unremitting effort in the previous verse; and the revelation of the Vel-consciousness, in the next verse, is at once the consummation of that effort as also the fulfillment of this prayer.

It is body-consciousness or conditioned-consciousness that causes fear of physical death. When protection under the Feet is granted or Universal (*Vel*) consciousness supervenes, for which he now prays, fear of physical death is overcome, and transmigration also ceases, because there is then no question of the soul's going anywhere — but to remain forever under the Lord's Feet.

We have to make a distinction between death of the body and death (departure) of the soul. The death of the body is unavoidable; it is a natural process, the *dharma* of the body, which has to disintegrate when the force that gave the momentum to it ceases. The death (departure) of the soul means transmigration. What is reborn is not the body but the soul. Since "rebirth" presupposes death, and because rebirth is for the soul and not the body, the soul that has to be reborn is said to die. Hence, by death of the soul, what is meant is transmigration. While the death of the body cannot be avoided, the soul's death, i.e. transmigration, can be. This freedom from transmigration is what is meant by "*Saagaadhu*"; and the natural process of the body's death, which cannot be avoided, by "*Namanaar Kalagam*".

When the body dies, if the soul has good or bad (Sanchita) Karmas to be worked out by it, Yama takes possession of it, passes judgment according to its deeds and involves it into further births — high or low. This transmigratory process can be avoided if the soul devotes itself to God, meditates on Him and attains Mukti or Liberation. This is to rest in the Lord's Feet, for which is the prayer in this verse. If God-Realisation is

attained, if the Jiva burns all its Karmas by Atma-Jnana, i.e., establishment in the Atman or Vel-consciousness, before the body's death, it will not be subject to transmigration. This freedom can be attained even while living in this body, which is called Jivanmukti.

The attainment of Freedom or Lord's Feet or Mukti, is not necessarily an after-death achievement but a possibility and an actual experience here and now. It is not of much consequence in what condition the body is at the time of death — whether it is healthy, diseased, young, old, worshipped, ignored, etc. — in determining the liberation of the soul; what really matters is the state of consciousness of the Jiva — because liberation is not of or for the body, but the soul. The consciousness (Jiva) it is that is either bound or liberated. The state of consciousness maintained before and at the time of the death of the body determines its condition after death also. Hence, the Jiva cannot be said to attain after death, a state totally unknown and unconnected to what it was just before death. What it was before, it is also after death. This explains the possibility of Jivanmukti. Hence, the prayer for the Lord's protection of the Jiva under His Feet at the time when Yama plays his mischief, i.e., death of the body, means the soul's longing for freedom while yet alive, i.e., Jivanmukti state — to grant God-consciousness. Therefore, "at the time of Yama's mischief" refers to "physical death"; while "*Saagaadhu*" or "without dying", which means "not to be reborn", refers to the soul's liberation from (death) transmigration.

There is one interesting point to note here. Either one attains Liberation before leaving this body if all his Karmas are finished, or he has to take at least one more birth if he has still some more Karmas to be worked out. Hence those who finish all their Karmas, by any means (Bhakti or Jnana or Yoga), attain Liberation while still living in this body which is known

as Jivanmukti. On shedding their bodies they become Videhamuktas. All others are subject to rebirth.

"At the time when Yama plays his mischief, protect me, protect me under Thine Feet," prays the seeker. Why does he say "Kaa", "Kaa" — protect me, protect me — twice? It is not an 'emergency call'. It cannot be for immediate protection from Yama, because the danger is not close at hand; it is far off which is clear from the words "*Kalagam Seyum Naal*" — "at that time". Had Yama already come and is trying to take the soul and had the Lord not come to its help so far, the 'emergency call' would have been appropriate. But it is not so. Again, this cannot be a prayer to the Lord to hurry up at that time when Yama would come, because it is meaningless; for, if there is time for Yama to come, the Lord has also enough time to come. The Lord need not be hurried now itself. Moreover, the Lord is all-knowing, all-powerful, and omnipresent. Hence, "Kaa", "Kaa", indicates the longing of the soul for immediate liberation and not protection from Yama. **We have to carefully note that the protection sought for is not** *from* **Yama but** *in the Lord's Feet***. Protection in the Feet means liberation. And "Kaa", "Kaa" is used to indicate immediacy in liberation, i.e.., liberation** *here* **and** *now***, and not later.**

This *now* and *here* are mysterious factors. They mean the transcendence of time and space. What is this "now"? Every moment is a 'now', at that time. What we call "the past" was then a 'now'; "the present" is now a 'now'; and "the future" will then be a 'now'. The past, present and future are, therefore, a mere play of the 'now', or Eternity. In Eternity, there is no past, present, and future; it always is a 'now'. Similarly, in Infinity there is no here, there, etc.; it always is a 'here'. So is the prayer, "Under Thine Feet protect me (here) ("Kaa") and protect me (now) ("Kaa"). Hence, it is clearly a prayer or longing for Jivanmukti or liberation here and now. "Protect me (here) and protect me (now) under Thine Foot Lotuses, i.e., grant me

Jivanmukti, in order that, at the time when Yama makes his mischief, the soul need not die (i.e., pass into his hand) and thereby avoid rebirth or transmigration."

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VERSE-42

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குறியைக் குறியாது குறித்தறியும்
நெறியைத் தனிவேலை நிகழ்த்திடலும்
செறிவற்று உலகோடு உரை சிந்தையுமற்று
அறிவற்று அறியாமையும் அற்றதுவே.

Kuriyaik kuriyaathu kurittthariyum,
Neriyait thanivelai nikazhtthidalum
Cherivatru ulakodu urai sinthaiyum atru,
Arivatru ariyaamaiyum atrathuve.

To Know the Object Supreme by thinking without thinking,
That State, — the Vel Incomparable, — no sooner is it granted,
Than, lo, world's relations ceased, speech and mind too ceased,
Ceased the intellect and, lo, ignorance also ceased!

"As soon as the Incomparable *Vel* Revealed Itself, i.e., that Supreme State ('*Neri*' or Mukti) of Knowing (Realising) the Object (of meditation) by thinking without thinking, supervened, all my relations with the people and the world ceased, speech and mind also ceased, intellect ceased and ignorance, too, ceased."

Commentary

This is the only verse in the whole work where there is no reference to the Lord; perhaps because it is the state of Samadhi or the supervening of Super-Consciousness.

Yes, by the Grace of God/Guru, the Goal has been reached, the *Vel* revealed Itself, Brahman-Consciousness supervened, *Jivanmukti* attained, and Ignorance with all its retinue ceased to be! The great struggle has yielded the Fruit of *Brahma-Jnana*!

This is a verse of the mystic experience of Samadhi, very difficult to understand even for oneself, more difficult to explain in words, but is indeed the most blessed state to Experience. Experience is *experience*; it cannot be understood, much less explained, but only to be 'experienced'. It is the culmination and consummation of lifelong Sadhana coupled with divine grace. The disciple put into practice the Guru's instructions of verse-37, in Toto, and attained Samadhi, the Goal, God-Realisation.

The Guru instructed him: (1) to meditate on '*Aham Brahma Asmi*' (*Iraiyon parivaaram*) and aspire to realise/attain that state (*enum padam mevalaiye purivaai*); (2) and by '*Poraiyaam Arivaal*' -- Knowledge called Serenity or Consciousness-Being (*Chit-svaroopa*); (3) '*Arivaai adiyodum agandaiyaiye*' -- destroy the ego-sense by its root. Accordingly, the disciple commenced the practice in all earnestness in verse-40 by uninterrupted meditation on the Karma-destroying Vel and continued it with a prayer (longing) for Immediate Realisation here and now (*Jivanmukti*) in verse-41, and realised the Goal in this verse. How?

குறியை -- '*Kuri*' means *Lakshya* or the Goal, or the Object to be Attained, i.e., **Brahman**. (refered to as Murugan, Feet, etc., in the path of Devotion or *Bhakti*; and as Vel-Consciousness, Atman, Self, Satchidananda, Absolute, etc., in the path of Wisdom or *Jnana*.)

குறித்து -- '*Kuriththu*' means 'to think of' or **concentration** on the Object; in this thinking or **concentration**

on Brahman, there are also extraneous thoughts disturbing or distracting the concentration.

குறியாது குறித்து -- '*Kuriyaathu*' means without thinking of anything else, i.e., without any distractions; '*Kuriyaathu kuriththu*' means total concentration on the Object without any distraction. There is an unbroken thought of the Object *only*, like the continuous flow of oil from one vessel to another. This is **meditation**. It is a process wherein there are three things: the meditator, the Object of meditation and the act of meditation or thinking. When this undistracted meditation is deepened by practice over a protracted period, there ensues **Samadhi**.

அறிதல் -- '*Arithal*' means to Know or Experience, i.e., **Samadhi**. In Samadhi the meditator and act of meditation merge into the Object (Brahman), which alone **IS**.

குறியைக் குறியாது குறித்து அறிதல் -- '*Kuriyaik kuriyaathu kuriththu arithal*' means to meditate on Brahman without any other thought, by which the mind enters into Brahman and becomes Brahman (like the river entering into the ocean and becomes the ocean itself), and Knows Brahman by Being Brahman. This is **Samadhi**. This is the 'State' of Liberation or Mukti or Moksha. *This phrase* – குறியைக் குறியாது குறித்து அறிதல் -- *explains the process of true meditation, resulting in* ***Samadhi***. This resulting 'State' of Samadhi is termed as '*Neri*' -- குறியைக் குறியாது குறித்தறியும் நெறி.

நெறி -- '*Neri*': Its meaning is முத்தி, i.e., Moksha or Liberation. It is not a 'means' or way (to some thing), but a 'State' of Consciousness (**Samadhi**).

குறியைக் குறியாது குறித்து அறிதல் -- '*Kuriyaik kuriyaathu kuriththu arithal*' and நெறி -- '*Neri*' --- They both mean the same thing -- Samadhi or Moksha.

Thus, by meditation on Brahman, the Absolute (குறியை) , without thinking (குறியாது -- *kuriyaadhu*(of anything else, with a totally concentrated mind (*ekaagra chitta*) fixed on Brahman [(குறியை மட்டும்(குறித்து – [(*Kuriyai mattum) kuriththu*], he Experienced or Realised Brahman (அறிதல்), which is the state of Samadhi or Moksha or Liberation (நெறி -- *Neri*). 'நெறி' is 'முத்தி' or Moksha; it is not 'a means' to Moksha.

This '*Neri*' was referred to as '*Padam*' (பதம்(in verse-37, which the seeker was asked to attain. In Samadhi the meditating Jiva-consciousness merges into Brahman-Consciousness and becomes Brahman, and then BE Brahman, like the river rushing towards the ocean and merging with the ocean at the confluence and then become and BE the ocean itself. In Samadhi, one Experiences or Knows Brahman by being Brahman, i.e., Knowing and Being is the same; *Sat* is *Chit*. And, Brahman is Pure Consciousness (*Prajnanam Brahma)*; even so is the Vel. Brahman, Vel, Moksha, Consciousness, Samadhi, Liberation, Lord's Feet -- all these mean one and the same. So Arunagiri says '*Neriyai*' (நெறியை) -- Moksha, '*Thani Velai*' (தனி வேலை) – Supreme Consciousness, thereby equating them with one another, showing they both mean the same thing, and not two different things. If they were two different things that were granted, he would have said '*Neriyai***yum** *ThaniVelai***yum**'. So, Arunagiri says 'Neriyai', 'Thani Velai' '**Nigazhthidalum**' (நெறியைத் தனிவேலை நிகழ்த்திடலும்(. '*Nigazhthuthal*' means 'make it happen' or 'supervene'. Moksha, Samadhi, Vel, Super-consciousness, etc., are 'States' of Pure Consciousness; these are 'not given' but they 'happen'

or 'supervene', by the Grace of Guru/God. Samadhi or Super-conscious State spontaneously supervenes at the end of meditation. While meditation is a process, Samadhi is a state or condition of 'Being' which spontaneously 'supervenes'. Hence, it is mentioned as '*Nigazhthidalum*' (நிகழ்த்திடலும்), i.e., made to happen or supervene (by the Grace of the Lord). When Samadhi/Vel-Consciousness supervened, "All relationships with the people and the world ceased, speech and mind also ceased, intellect (ego) ceased and ignorance, too, ceased." The instruction of verse-37 was to destroy 'ego with its root' (*arivaai adiyoodum aganthaiyaiyee*), and when the root is destroyed, naturally the branches, twigs, leaves, etc. get destroyed. So here it is said that not only the ego's root, Avidya or Ignorance (*Ariyaamai*) is destroyed, but also the intellect, mind, speech and all relationships came to an end. Thus we see a complete correspondence between the instructions of verse-37 and its Realisation in this verse.

It is in this verse that there is a categorical declaration that Avidya or *Ariyaamai* has been completely destroyed; the *Ariyaamai* which remained unpardoned (not destroyed) after the near Cosmic Consciousness experience (verses 28 and 29) and to destroy which was the instruction in verse-37.

How this state of Samadhi supervenes is indeed a wonder. By a mysterious combination of *Purva Punya* (accumulated past merits), one's Sadhana-Sakti (power of one's spiritual practice), Guru's power of initiation (*Shakti-paata*) and *Isvara Kripa* (God's grace) the Vel or Super-Consciousness reveals itself. This is the state of *Turiya,* i.e., Consciousness in Its transcendental state, bereft of its relation with the five *Kosas* (sheaths), which is so precisely conveyed in the verse.

Relationship with the world is established by the body (the organs of action) which is the *Annamaya Kosa* (physical sheath). Speech, which is due to the operation of the Prana,

represents *Pranamaya Kosa* (vital sheath). Mind is *Manomaya Kosa* (mental sheath). Intellect is *Vijnanamaya Kosa* (intellectual sheath). Ignorance or Avidya is the *Aanandamaya Kosa* (bliss sheath). Thus, all the five *Kosas* cease functioning when the Jiva enters into Samadhi. This is also the state of Supreme *Mowna* (Silence), the '*Pesaa Anubhuti'* of the next verse, and the granting of the Lord's Feet which shine in Moksha, etc., of verse-44.

All the three verses (verse 42, 43, and 44) describe the attainment of the Goal, --- God-Realisation, in three different ways. In this verse it is expressed in mystic terms (*Jnana* or *Vel*), and in the next it is explicitly said employing the term *Anubhuti*. Hence, that verse is regarded as the climax of the treatise. In verse-44 it is described in devotional terms (*Bhakti* or *the Feet*). But why should Arunagiri describe God-Realisation in three verses? This we shall see in verse-44.

What is said in this verse, exactly the same thing is said in verse-48 also in a more clarified form.

As a result of the determined effort at establishment in the Vel-consciousness ("*Aham Brahma Asmi*") meditation (verse 40), which was duly intensified by a longing to attain the state of Jivanmukti (liberation) here and now (verse 41), the Sadhaka is now granted the state of Mukti (Vel-consciousness), by which the individuality-consciousness (Avidya) is annihilated. Here is an open and emphatic declaration that Avidya ceases (*Ariyaamai Attradhu*). This is the state of Samadhi — the state of Being-Consciousness (or "Knowledge called Serenity" — *Poraiyaam Aviru*) attained by meditation on "*Aham Brahma Asmi*", which destroys Avidya. This grand experience is portrayed more vividly and in positive terms in the next verse as "*Pesaa Anubhuti*" (Speechless-Experience).

As seen in the last verse, the Vel and the Lord's Feet mean one and the same thing, and they go together. This is confirmed by this verse. How? That "non-thinking and the non-forgetting state (of Mukti), which is attainable by the grant of the Lord's Feet (verse 21)", is "the state (of Mukti) of knowing the Object by thinking-without-thinking" that is granted now (verse 42). The *"Karudhaa Maravaa **Neri***" (Verse-21) is the "*Kuriyaik Kuriyaadhu Kuritthu Ariyum **Neri***" (this verse): Which means the "***Neri***" (Mukti) attainable by the grant of the Feet is had when the Vel is revealed. From this it is quite evident that the Feet and the Vel mean one and the same, i.e., Mukti or Liberation. Their non-difference can also be seen from verses 40 and 41 — while the effort in verse 40 was to fix oneself in an uninterrupted meditation on the Vel, the intensification of that effort is expressed as a longing for an immediate attainment of (protection under) the Feet in verse 41. The revelation of the Vel, in this verse, naturally implies the simultaneous granting of the Lord's Feet as well, which fact is, of course, explicitly and categorically declared in verse 44, which is an exclamation over, a gratitude for, as also an effect of, what has been granted now.

In verse 21 also, "Neri" refers to Mukti and not a way (or method) because by the granting of the Lord's Feet, one attains Mukti and not merely a way to achieve something. The Lord's Feet (which represent *Parama-pada* or Omnipresence) are themselves the Object of Attainment and not a means to something else. This is evident from the prayer in verse 35 wherein he says, "When shalt Thou grant me Thine Lotus Feet that I may attain Liberation (Mukti)," as also of the prayer of verse 41. So, the granting of the Feet is itself Mukti which again is confirmed in verse 44. Thus, "Neri" is "Mukti", i.e., a state and not a method; an end and not a means.

There are two kinds of knowledge: knowledge-by-process and knowledge-by-being; sensory knowledge and pure self-

consciousness (intuition); mediate knowledge and immediate or non-mediate knowledge. Knowledge obtained through perception, sensation, etc., i.e., obtained through the operation of the senses, mind, and intellect, is sensory knowledge. This knowledge comes by a process of knowing, in which the intellect, mind, and senses act as instruments or media to the knowing principle which is the Self or Consciousness. When the Consciousness, which is universal, gets associated, as it were, with these instruments, it gets involved in them and is limited to them. Then it begins to see things other than itself and knows them in a process. When the consciousness, thus, limited, objectifies itself through the individual mind, thinking takes place. When it further moves out and activates the senses and the organs (body), which are the means of contact, it establishes a relation with the world, through speech and action. Thus, the consciousness moves out and has knowledge of the world outside through the mind and senses, and establishes a contact with it through the body. This is the kind of knowledge that is known to us. The highest type of knowledge in this kind is intellectual knowledge, which is finally based on the report of the senses of the outside world. This is objectified knowledge; knowing by thinking; mediate knowledge.

But, there is another kind of knowledge, a novel kind altogether. It is known as Self-consciousness or Intuition, which supervenes in the state of Samadhi or Realisation. This is non-objectified awareness. This is the Vel-consciousness or "Knowing the Object by `thinking-without-thinking'".

These expressions carry mystic meanings, far beyond our intellectual grasp. Thinking without thinking, sleepless sleep, Vel-consciousness, etc., are very mystic. They all connote the state of Samadhi or Mukti, for which Arunagirinathar uses the term "*Neri*". Though it is impossible to explain what this state of Self-consciousness is, because it is an *experience* (i.e., to be

had for oneself) — it can be made clear by proceeding on the lines of a simple analogy of our day-to-day experience.

As we know, there is a difference between our knowing the existence of an object and knowing our own existence (as a bodily entity). How do we know that an object exists? By the process of perception and thinking, because the object known and the knowing subject (we) are not the same, i.e., they are two different entities standing apart. In other words, the existence of the object is separated from our consciousness of it.

But, how do we know that we exist? Not by perception, not by thinking; we need not see ourselves to know that we exist, nor do we need to think or ratiocinate. We know our existence by a kind of intuition or self-consciousness! What is this? The consciousness or the knowing principle in us gets so much identified with the body that it regards itself as the body and feels "I am", in the sense "I am the body". Here, for all practical purposes "I" means the body.

In the perception of objects, the consciousness objectifies itself further, i.e., goes outside the body, and knows them. In our knowing of ourselves, the consciousness which has, thus, gone outside the body does nothing but to return to itself (i.e., the body) and be itself, and know itself as such, as "I am", without involving perception or thinking. The consciousness coming back to itself, being itself, and knowing itself — this is intuition or self-consciousness — this is knowing by "thinking without thinking". This is knowing by being, wherein both knowing and being are one, i.e., being itself is knowing.

This, of course, is the crudest form of intuition or self-consciousness because, here, there are still two things — the inert body and the knowing consciousness — which are superimposed on each other. The Jiva-consciousness to regard itself as the body is the lowest degree of self-consciousness and

there are higher degrees of self-consciousness — the consciousness identified with the mind, with the intellect, and with the ego or Avidya — when it feels, respectively, "I am happy, I am dejected"; "I know, I am baffled"; and "I exist or I am" with the feeling that it (the Jiva-consciousness) has an independent existence of its own, isolated from the cosmic existence of Isvara. This Jivatva or pure Jiva-consciousness is the highest degree of self-consciousness of the Jiva, wherein the universal consciousness gets reflected in Avidya or individuality, and forgetting its universal nature asserts its limited existence as "I am." Thus, the feeling "I am body," "I am mind," etc., are the different degrees of self-consciousness of the Jiva-consciousness. But, in Self-Consciousness (Intuition) proper, there is a return of this identified or Jiva-consciousness to its Source — the universal condition of Isvaratva — and Consciousness, bereft of any associations, knows Itself by being Itself. It is difficult to say what knows what, which is the knower and which is the known, because the universal is both the subject and the object, the knower and the known. It is the Universal knowing Itself. Something is, and That knows Itself as "I am" — *Ahamasmi*. It is Self-Consciousness of Universal Being — It is Being-Consciousness.

The return of the objectified Jiva-consciousness to itself is, in a limited sense, self-consciousness. And the return of the pure Jiva-consciousness to Isvara or God is real Self-Consciousness — in both the cases, there is no extroverted knowing, but Knowing by Being.

Here the pertinent question, "Can one thing really become another?" may be raised. Indeed one thing cannot really be (or become) another; but a thing which has imagined itself to be something other than what it really is, can be freed from its false imagination (for which purpose is meditation prescribed and practised) and be what it really is (which is Realisation).

Now, how does the Jiva become (or be) Isvara (God) and know Him? There is an element of God in man. When man sheds his human elements (or faculties), the God-element, left to itself, realises Itself as such. So, it is God realising God, not man realising God. How can one thing realise another thing? How can man realise God? Hence, it is significantly said as God-Realisation, Self-Realisation, or *Saakshaatkaara* (one thing realising Itself), and not as man-realisation. It is God-Experience, not man-experience.

The Vedantic method of *Neti, Neti* (not this, not this) doctrine and *Abheda Brahma Chintan* with *Aham Brahmasmi Bhavana*: Consciousness, which is universal in its nature, gets limited to individuality (Avidya) and objectifies itself through the intellect and mind, and finally establishes a relationship with the world through the senses and the body. The consciousness, in a state of delusion, regards itself as the body, senses, etc. When the Guru gives *Mahavakya Upadesa* and instructs the disciple to meditate on "*Aham Brahma Asmi*," the consciousness gets awakened to its real nature. Now, the process of meditation starts. The consciousness, which in identification with the body, thought "I am the body, I am Mr. so and so, I am tall, etc." knowing itself to be different from the body, because the body is inert, feels "(I am) not this (body)." Together with this, it affirms its real nature, as initiated by the Guru, as *Aham Brahma Asmi* (I am Brahman). In the same way, the consciousness withdraws itself from the senses, mind, intellect, ego, and Avidya, saying, "(I am) not this; (I am) not this." Thus, when the Consciousness sheds all its limiting adjuncts and finally rests in Itself, or stands by Itself (bereft of all associations) *It is Itself* and knows Itself and experiences "I am Consciousness" — "I am Brahman."

In the meditation '*Aham Brahma Asmi*' or 'Iam Brahman*'*, it is not that "I" is one thing and "Brahman" is another thing; it is not one thing says (or feels), "I am another". It is not the

Jiva's egoistic assertion, "I am Brahman." As we have seen, Brahman Itself goes by the name of Jiva when limited to the Upadhis. It is not this limited Jiva-consciousness, in the state of Avidya, that feels, "I am Brahman", but Brahman Himself that feels so. It is one thing feeling and experiencing that it is itself only. It is what is that knows what it is. It is Self-Consciousness of God as "I am" (or "*Ahamasmi*").

It is something like this: when we ask Mr. Krishna, "Who are you?" he would say, "I am Krishna." But to himself, he does not say, "I am Krishna", but only feels, "I am" or "I exist". Similarly, when the Guru gives initiation saying, "*Tat Tvam Asi*" (Thou art That), the student says, "*Aham Brahma Asmi*" (I am Brahman) and also affirms so in meditation while negating the body, mind, etc., by the *Neti-Neti,* doctrine. Finally, as a result of intense and prolonged meditation and the dawn of Divine Grace, Self-consciousness supervenes in Samadhi and the Jiva-consciousness attains freedom (liberation) — Mukti. The liberated consciousness rests in itself and knows itself as "*Ahamasmi*".

Mukti (God-Realisation) is not necessarily an after-death attainment but an experience (or state of consciousness) which can be had here and now, while yet living in this body. This is called Jivanmukti and it has been attained by many saints like Appar, Sundarar, Jnana-Sambanthar, Arunagirinathar, Swami Sivananda, and others. Mukti can be attained here itself because God is not somewhere in the seventh heaven (or in some particular place) so that the soul has to go there, after death, to attain Him. He is the universal Reality, Omnipresent, and Omniscient. He is everywhere and so He must be attainable here itself. If God cannot be experienced ‘here’, He cannot be experienced ‘there’, also. And if God is elsewhere, He must also be here; otherwise, He ceases to be the God -- the Eternal and Omnipresent -- and becomes an object, like any other object, however big, superior, and glorified He might be, and

will be subject to the limitations of an object. Hence, Mukti is and can be attained here itself and this is the state conferred in this verse, which is denoted by the terms "Neri" and "Incomparable Vel".

It is interesting to note that, in the work *Kandar Anubhuti*, Arunagirinathar employs the term "Neri" only in two verses — Verses 21 and 42; the former verse is a prayer to grant His Lotus Feet to attain Mukti and the latter is granting of Mukti.

The master-stroke comes when Arunagirinathar completes the verse saying, "No sooner is this granted than the relations with the world ceased, speech ceased, mind ceased, intellect ceased, and ignorance (Avidya) also ceased." All this is achieved, especially the destruction of Avidya, only when the Jiva is absorbed in God, i.e., in Self-Consciousness or God-Realisation. The Universal, due to Avidya, regards itself as the particular and in the process of meditation, when the Jiva is granted the Vel (or the state of Knowing the Object — the Universal -- by thinking-without-thinking), it returns to Itself, and Avidya is destroyed. Avidya cannot cease to exist by mere instruction on a technique of meditation. Thus this verse is not an instruction to be practised to achieve something, but the **achievement** of the Goal Itself, consequent upon the practice of the previous verses (Verse-40: *Jnana* and Verse-41: *Bhakti*).

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VERSE-43

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தூசா மணியும் துகிலும் புனைவாள்
நேசா முருகா நினது அன்பருளால்
ஆசா நிகளம் துகளாயின பின்
பேசா அநுபூதி பிறந்ததுவே.

Thoosaa maniyum thukilum punaivaal
Nesaa murugaa ninathu anparulaal
Aasaa nikalam thukalaayina pin,
Pesaa anubhooti piranthathuve.

She who wears clean gems and clothes,
Her Beloved, O Muruga, by Thine Love-Grace,
The desire-chain having been reduced to dust,
Was born Speechless-Experience, grand indeed most.

"O Lord Muruga, the Beloved of her (Valli) who wears clean (garlands or ornaments made of) gems and clothes! By Thine Love-Grace, the desire-chain was shattered to dust (i.e., destroyed) and then Speechless-Experience (i.e., Direct Experience or *Saakshaatkaara*) was born."

Commentary

Samadhi or actual Realisation of God has been attained in the previous verse. What the Sannyasin-disciple experienced while he was immersed in that state of Samadhi is recounted in this verse, naturally as a later recollection, because it was a ‘speechless’ condition, all the faculties having ceased; and so

the experience is given in the past tense, after he emerged from that experience.

In this verse the Lord is said to be the beloved of Valli who wears clean gems and clothes, though normally hunter-women's dresses are not so clean. This is to show that the Jiva which was full of impurities (Rajas and Tamas) in the beginning of Sadhana, after long years of Sadhana and initiation into Sannyasa has become so Sattwa-predominated (pure) as to draw or reflect the grace of the Lord in a full measure. That condition is described as '*anbarul'* (Anbu + Arul) which is a curious word coined by Arunagiri. '*Anbu*' is love or devotion to God, which includes and/or is expressed as prayer, aspiration, effort and surrender. (i.e., the Jiva's effort or aspiration to attain God, by prayer and surrender). '*Arul*' is grace, which the Lord showers upon the Jiva in response to its *Anbu*. Sadhana or spiritual practice is a continuous struggle and we have seen that from the very beginning obstacles present themselves again and again in increasing intensity, to overcome which the seeker had to intensify his prayer and surrender more and more, which draws the grace of the Lord in a greater and greater measure. As he thus advances, this 'divine circle' of problems/obstacles---love/prayer/surrender---grace/blessings goes on. This is the mysterious divine play of *Anbu-Arul* interacting with and intensifying each other. And when the climax is reached, when the love/surrender is total and the grace flows in torrents, the two fuse together and there is Illumination or Realisation, (just as when the positive and the negative come together, there is light,) which destroys the darkness of Ignorance (Avidya or *Ariyaamai*) and its effects, i.e., the 'vicious chain of desires' (*Avidya--Kaama--Karma*).This fusing of the two is indicated by '*Anbarul*', by which the vicious chain of *Avidya-Kaama-Karma* is destroyed (*Aasaa Nigalam Thugalaayina*), (*Pin*) resulting in '*Pesaa Anubhuti' piranthathu*, which is establishment in *Nirvikalpa Samadhi* or Supreme Silence.

Also, this 'Anbarul' has another significance. This *Anbu* or individual effort itself is a manifestation of *Arul* or grace only, working through the Jiva or individual ego – அவன் அருளால் அவன் தாள் வணங்கி, (*Avan Arulaal Avan Thaal Vanangi*). But in the initial stages when the Jiva is not pure enough, it is unable to feel this and thinks it is putting forth effort by itself. As it advances in Sadhana and the ego gets more and more thin or purified, it starts realising that its effort is due to the Lord's grace. And when it is totally purified of Rajas and Tamas, it feels that it is grace alone that has been working all the time and that it's so-called self-effort was nothing but the grace manifesting through the ego. Finally, when both *Anbu* and *Arul*, or self-effort and Lord's grace fuse together, there is Illumination or the birth of '*Pesaa Anubhuti'*. Thus the whole of spiritual life is nothing but the play of God's Grace only; both *Anbu* and *Arul* are God's. Hence Arunagiri says '**Ninathu** *Anbarulaal',* by **Your** *Love-Grace.* Not only *Arul* is His, but *Anbu* too is His only. If we carefully go through the whole work of *Kandar Anubhuti*, we find that from the very beginning, even from the *Kaappu* and first verse, the word '*Arul*' occurs, i.e., the work starts with prayers for grace -- spiritual practice starts with grace of God. And the word '*Arul*' keeps occurring now and then throughout the work and finally ends with '*Arul*' in the last verse, to show that *Anubhuti* or God-Realisation is a progressive unfoldment of *Arul* or Grace right from the beginning to the end. So we can say: அவன் அருளால் அவன் தாள் வணங்கி, அவன் அருளால் அவனை அடையப் பெற்றேன். -- By His Grace we start worshipping His Feet and By His Grace we Attain Him. Perhaps we can say, '*Kandar Anubhuti'* is '*Arul Anubhuti'* – God-Experience is Grace-Experience.

It may be interesting to note that, in all probability, Arunagiri gave this Divine Work "*Kandar Anubhuti*" at a place called *Thirut-thurutthi* where he was commanded by the Lord.

In T-850 Arunagiri says: "Just as one who has been given refuge is protected and taken care of, You affectionately invited this worthless person and graced me by **embossing the seal of *the Vel and the Peacock*** (etched on both shoulders, as a protective shield for me) and commanded me: 'Sing My Mukti-conferring (*Kandar*) *Anubhuti*, (which is) full of My (**Arul**) Grace and (**Tirup-Pugazh**) Divine Glory'." (Please refer to the Section 'Sthala Yatra' in the article "The Glorious Life of the sinner-transformed-Saint Arunagirinathar" for more details).

"By this Anbu-arul, the chain of desire has been shattered to dust." -- *Avidya – Kaama--Karma* (Ignorance–desire–action) are the links of this chain. They are called the knots of the heart (*Hridaya Granthis*). Ignorance (or the absence of Knowledge) of the Self/God, as also of the deceptive nature of objects, causes desires for objects. These desires impel a person to put forth efforts (Karmas) to possess and enjoy them. These desire-prompted actions produce their reactions, results or fruits, which are called *Karma-phala*, which thicken Ignorance. Thus is the endless chain of Ignorance-desire-action which is destroyed by the Light of *Jnana* or Wisdom produced by *Anbu-arul*.

When thus the chain of desires is destroyed by *Anbu-arul*, the Jiva gets melted into the Absolute, and '*Peesaa Anubhuti'* is born, Supreme Silence Supervenes. Man merges into God and emerges as a God-man, the Jiva becomes a Jivanmukta Purusha, which exalted condition is described graphically in the next verse. Verses 42 to 44 are thrilling and stimulating, as the climax of the treatise is reached here.

In the heart of the Sadhaka that is rendered perfectly pure and filled with longing (love) for God (*Mumukshutva*), Divine Grace is attracted and the commingling of the two breaks the

causal desire-chain (Avidya) and there blossoms forth *Pesaa Anubhuti* (God-Experience).

The grand Goal fixed (and prayed for) in the beginning of one's Sadhana (verse 2) and for the attainment of which so much of ordeal has been gone through, is realised now. That "all-ceasing and mine-losing Good" has been attained.

It is rare that souls gifted with *Pesaa Anubhuti* remain absorbed in Samadhi and don't rise from it. Usually they do come out of Samadhi and engage themselves in *Loka-sangraha* — acts of compassion for the solidarity of the world. As their inner awareness of God is steady, they radiate joy and bliss; they are regarded as moving Gods on earth, and their actions are verily God's actions. To have Satsanga with such great souls (*Mahatmas*), to get an opportunity to serve them, to listen to them, and to be guided by them is indeed a rare privilege. Just as God came as Guru of the Sadhaka in the beginning of his practices and guided him; God, in turn, makes him guide other seeking souls, as their Guru. Hence, it would not be right to regard that the work *Kandar Anubhuti* ends with this verse, as some believe. The liberated soul moves about freely, ministering spiritual food to hungry souls, according to their needs; such are verses 45 and onwards which are, therefore, unique but variegated in nature. Thus, the world is never bereft of realised souls (Gurus) to provide the needed guidance to aspiring souls.

This is a very beautiful and sweet verse in which Arunagirinathar sums up the entire process of Sadhana as well as the attainment of the Goal. In each verse, the Lord is addressed with words significantly meaningful, appropriate to the context. Here, the Lord is referred to as the Beloved of Valli who wears pure gems (ornaments) and clothes.

Why is the Lord the beloved of Valli? Or, what is it that attracted (or endeared) the Lord to her and to be her Beloved? Is it her riches, her erudition, her high birth, or social status? No; none of these. Her pure love attracted the Lord. On hearing from Rishi Narada of her undivided devotion for Him even from her previous birth, Lord Skanda left His abode for Vallimalai where, in the fields, she was protecting the corns. He was not enamored of her wealth, etc., which have no meaning for the Lord. What brought glory to Valli and what endeared her to the Lord was not her riches (gems, pearls, etc.), her position of being a princess, etc., but simple devotion, pure love for the Lord. Wealth, position, etc., are great in the eyes of the world; but not in God's vision. His ways of judgment of one's greatness (or worth) is quite different from the human, social way of judgment.

On the other hand, the more does one become "small", i.e., simple, unassuming and humble, the more does one become "great" in the eyes of God. Nothing but true, undivided, pure devotion of the Jiva can draw God's attention and grace, and He becomes the Beloved of such souls. This is very beautifully and meaningfully brought out by Arunagirinathar when he says that the Lord is the "Beloved" of Valli who wears *clean clothes and gems*. This has the specific purpose of indicating the need for a whole-souled devotion on the part of the Jiva so as to attract the grace of the Lord and have Him as one's Beloved. Though the Lord loves all equally and His grace is on one and all in the same measure, He becomes the Beloved of only those Jivas that are pure.

Is not God an embodiment of Grace? Why, then, should He shower His grace on Valli, i.e., pure souls, only? It is true that God is an ocean of grace and compassion. His grace is on all beings, and always. But, what about one's fitness to receive and experience it? The sun shines and sheds its light equally on all objects. But do they all reflect it in the same measure? No.

Each object reflects it according to its capacity. A block of stone (or wood) does practically reflect nothing, while a polished brass (or silver) vessel reflects it partially; but a clean (vs. dirty) mirror reflects the light fully and radiantly. Even so, a Jiva that has rendered its *Antahkarana* (or mind) perfectly pure receives the Divine grace in its completeness and shines. The Lord is, therefore, said to be the Beloved of such purified souls and to bring out this fact, Arunagirinathar says, "Beloved of her who wears pure gems and clothes."

Now, this *Anbarul* can be explained from a different view-point also. Valli is the Jivatman. Her wearing clean clothes represents the whole-souled aspiration (love) of the purified Jiva to attain the Lord. Valli is Iccha-Sakti — purified and ennobled emotions — which is all-consuming divine love, *Anbu*. She is a personification of *Anbu*. This *Anbu*, therefore, denotes all that she stands for — absolute purity developed by intense Sadhana, single-minded devotion and firm determination to attain the Lord, all carried on patiently and unremittingly, with great enthusiasm, awaiting the Lord's grace. This Jiva's self-effort (or *Anbu*) draws divine grace (*Arul*) according to the degree of its intensity. To the extent the Jiva is pure and evinces love for God, to that extent divine grace manifests itself, i.e., to that extent the Lord becomes the Jiva's beloved. The love-attracted-grace, in turn, helps the Jiva put forth greater effort and thus, draws more grace. Love attracts grace and grace enriches love. When this joyous process goes on steadily and reaches its zenith, love and grace fuse into one another and become "love-grace" — *Anbarul.*

"O Lord Muruga, the Beloved of Valli who wears pure gems and clothes, by Your love-grace, the desire-chain was destroyed and Speechless-Experience born." This love-grace has a mystic connotation. Neither by the mere love or effort of the Jiva alone, nor by the mere grace of the Lord alone are these brought about. Effort and grace should totally stand together,

fuse into one another and become one, in order that the desires may be destroyed and Divine Experience be had. One can control one's senses, purify the mind, do intense Sadhana and love God whole-heartedly. Yet, the final release from the shackles of desire is possible only when Divine grace joins it. The subtle desires in the form of *Samskaras* and *Vasanas* imbedded in the subconscious and unconscious, and Avidya are not easy of annihilation, by mere effort. They are wiped out when God chooses to reveal Himself, i.e., when His grace dawns. The Gita says, "The objects of senses turn away from the abstinent man leaving the longing (behind); but this longing also turns away on seeing the Supreme" (II-59). This is one aspect of the matter, i.e., grace should join effort. The other aspect is: Is effort necessary at all? Or, will not grace alone do? No. God and His grace are one — they are inseparable like the sun and its light — and God being everywhere and ever-present, His grace is also there everywhere and always on all. But Grace can be made manifest or felt only in a purified heart, as sunlight can be reflected only by a clean mirror. Hence, effort is necessary to draw (or manifest) Divine grace.

Now, another interesting question poses itself. Even after putting forth effort by the Jiva and grace being ever-present, why do they not join and bring Divine Experience? This again is a mystery! We do not know when and how the two join and bring the Experience. God only knows. Hence, the Kathopanishad says, "He whom the Self (God) chooses, by him He is known. To him, He reveals His true nature." That is why we often come across dedicated and honest seekers who strive for God-Realisation for years but yet not achieve the Goal. Because, effort is there but grace has not yet joined it, i.e., God has not yet chosen them. Hence, such seekers should not get dejected, lose hope or give up their Sadhana, but patiently persevere awaiting the dawn of grace. Again, instances are many where apparently worthless souls, inimical to any

spiritual growth, have had the unique blessing of sudden Divine Illumination. Who can understand God's ways!

The mysterious *Anbarul* or Love-Grace: Now, while grace is of God, love is of the Jiva. But Arunagirinathar says, "By Your love-grace," i.e., not only the grace is His, the love (or effort) of the Jiva is also His. How is this? The Jiva is a part of Isvara (God) and it has no existence of its own. Hence, on ultimate analysis, the Jiva's effort is also Isvara's only; it is a way of working of His will (or grace). Divine grace expressed through the Jiva is self-effort (or love); *Arul* working through the Jiva is *Anbu*. It is called love when expressed through the Jiva; it is called grace when received (or experienced) by the Jiva. In fact, the two go together right from the beginning of Sadhana and experiences come at every stage of development of the soul, in varying degrees, though only at the culminating point of Samadhi they fuse into one another totally and give birth to God-Experience. Though the Jiva might regard itself as the doer of Sadhana, its effort is also Isvara's only even from the very start of Sadhana; but it is realised to be so only in the state of Samadhi. Men of wisdom, therefore, often say: God it is that appears to be in bondage, to be doing Sadhana, that showers and receives grace, that experiences Freedom (or Realisation). Everything seems to be a play of God, very marvelous and mysterious, baffling human understanding, as Lord Krishna says, "One sees This (the Self or God) as a wonder; another speaks of It as a wonder; another hears of It as a wonder; yet having heard, none understands It at all." (Gita: II-29). Such is the mystery of "Your-love-grace", and the purpose and peculiarity of the usage of "love-grace" (*Anbarul*) is to denote the commingling (or fusion) of the two — to destroy the desire-chain and give birth to Speechless-Experience.

The Desire-chain: A chain has a two-fold aspect. It acts as a fetter to bind the soul; and in itself it consists of rings,

linked to one another. It is desire that stands in the way of attaining Anubhuti. Desires bind the soul to earthly existence and subject it to birth and death, again and again. Desire is bondage and freedom from desire verily constitutes liberation. This, the Kathopanishad beautifully puts as, "When all the desires lodged in the heart are cast out, the mortal becomes Immortal here and now." The lesser the number (or intensity) of desires, the greater is the happiness, being closer to God; and the more the desire, the greater is the misery, being away from God. How far one is from God can thus be known by the number of desires that one cherishes (or the intensity of desires that assail a person.)

Desires are gross, subtle, and even causal, and they are manifest not merely on the surface of the mind. They are often hidden deep in our being. They are lodged in the recesses of the heart. Our very personality is made up of desires. We are nothing but a bundle of desires in different layers. It will not be wrong to say that desires are we, and we are what our desires are. They dominate over our physical personality, psychological being and extend even up to the subconscious and unconscious levels. Hence, they are compared to a chain. The desires that express themselves through our outer or physical personality have their links, like a chain, deep inside upto the unconscious. The entire chain of desires has to be destroyed if God-Experience is to be had. Hence, very significantly Arunagirinathar says, "desire chain" and not merely "desires".

"This desire-chain was made to dust by the love-grace of the Lord, and then Speechless-Experience ensued," says the Saint. '*Peesa Anubhuti*', Speechless Anubhuti, *Maha-Mowna,* Absolute-Experience, Bliss-Consciousness are all various terms that indicate the grand spiritual realisation of non-dual Awareness. This Awareness (or Anubhuti) "was born" says Arunagirinathar. It was not given, because giving implies a giver (i.e., another person) — duality. God Himself is that

Awareness (or Experience). Who is to give it? When the Vel reveals Itself, when Intuition dawns, when God-Consciousness supervenes, as stated in the previous verse, the Jiva-consciousness is absorbed in the Absolute Consciousness, and the latter alone remains by Itself. This is what is said as '*Than-nan-thani nindra-Athu*' – தன்னந்தனி நின்ற அது in verse 49.

A grand experience, which words cannot explain, is born when the desire-chain is destroyed by the love-grace of the Lord. When effort meets with Grace, when *Anbu* and *Arul* become one, which itself is a mystery, something more mysterious happens. The union of Jiva and Isvara results in the experience of the Absolute (Brahman), which transcends the concepts of Jiva and Isvara. The union of the two gives birth to a third. It is not third in the sense that it stands in addition to the two, as in the case of the birth of a child which is an addition to the parents, but it is third because it is neither of the two. The two vanish and in their place something Unknown is. This Unknown includes and transcends both, which are its apparent phases. This is the *Mowna-Anubhuti* that "is born", wherein are transcended the usual concepts of Jiva, as an effort-center, and of God (Isvara) as the bestower of grace (or destroyer of desires). All concepts, whatever they be, are phenomenal and so are transcended; and "*Pesaa Anubhuti* (Speechless-Experience)," supervenes (or "is born"). It is speechless from the standpoint of the Jiva, because all its faculties cease then, as explained in the previous verse; it is Experience, pure and simple, from the point of view of Isvara, because even the acts of destroying and bestowing cease. It is mere Experience — *Pesaa Anubhuti* — of which nothing can be said. The coming together of *Anbu* and *Arul* gives birth to Speechless-Experience. 'Due to *Anbu* (or extreme love), the Jiva loses itself in God and so becomes "speechless." Due to *Arul* (or grace of God), the Experience is born. *Anbarul* is *Pesaa Anubhuti*; Love-Grace is Speechless-Experience. What wonderful packing and

conveying of ideas! Even the Grand Experience is conveyed to a great extent in a Grand Manner, as much as language can contain and permit. In the entire work of Kandar Anubhuti, the term "*Anubhuti*" occurs only in this verse.

Heart and its role in Sadhana: It is interesting to note that the heart (not physical, but the inner or spiritual heart) plays the vital role in Sadhana and Realisation. Purity, love, grace, destruction of desires, birth of Anubhuti — these are the salient and successive points of the verse. Purity is of the heart. The heart is rendered pure by the annihilation of Rajas and Tamas, and development of Sattva. Devotion (love) emanates from a purified heart. Love attracts grace which is felt in the heart. The two commingle in the heart and cause destruction of desires. Desires are lodged in the heart. "*Anubhuti*" is then born in the heart. Thus, the heart is the arena of Sadhana and *Saakshaatkaara* or Realisation. It is the point of meeting of effort and grace; of the particular and the universal; of man and God; of Jiva and Isvara. Hence, the Narayana-Upanishad says, "In the center of the body is the sinless lotus of the heart, which is the abode of the Supreme Being. Further within that is the Sorrowless Ether, and That should be meditated upon." Hence, any spiritual practice that does not emanate from (or is not concerned with) the heart becomes more mechanical than vital, more hypocritical than real, more for others than for oneself; such a Sadhana becomes fruitless. The heart is the touchstone of spirituality. Hence saint Thiruvalluvar says: மனத்துக்கண் மாசிலன் ஆதல் அனைத்தறன்; ஆகுல நீர பிற. "All righteousness is to be pure in heart; all other things are mere show (Kural 4-4).

Link to other verses: The soul's cry of verse 39 is seen fulfilled in this verse. In verse 39, the soul had prayed: "O Lord, as You embraced Valli; come and embrace (grace) my soul; only then the three Eshanas (that grip me) will come to an end,

whereby my seven great births shall cease." Each item is correspondingly fulfilled in this verse. "When shall the three Eshanas cease?" was verse 39. "The desire-chain has been shattered," is the answer now. ("*Maayaividaa Moovedanai Enru Mudindhidum*?" "*Aasaa Nigalam Tugal Aayina*") — the three Eshanas are nothing but the desire-chain with links in the physical, subtle, and causal levels of the personality; both bind the soul to phenomenal existence. "In order to destroy the seven great births" (verse 39), "Speechless-Experience was born." ("*Maavezh Sananam Keda*" "*Pesaa Anubhuti Pirandadhu*") — the "seven great births" are put an end to with the "Birth of Speechless Anubhuti." The Birth of the one destroys the other births. What a mystery!

"*Anbarul*", as we have seen, is Murugan's Grace coupling with Valli's Love. It is the joining of Divine Grace with the Jiva's effort. It is God embracing the Jiva, for which prayer was offered in verse 39, which comes to pass now. That is why there is reference to Valli in both the verses. Thus, the prayer asked for in verse 39, followed by the determined effort (verse 40), gave a conviction that death cannot touch his soul (verse 41), revealed the Vel that at once swallowed up the Jiva (verse 42), and found its fulfillment in that Speechless-Experience (or the destruction of desires) through Love-Grace in this *Anubhuti* verse.

This verse, again, is the fulfillment of the prayer of verse 2: "O Lord Muruga, pray grant me that all-ceasing and mine-losing Good." "All-ceasing" takes place when "the desire-chain is shattered". (In "*Aasaa Nigalam Thugal Aayina*", "*Ellaam Attradhu*".) "Mine-losing" comes with "Speechless (ness)". In "*Pesaa (mai)*" "*Yennai Izhandhen*". The "*Good*" *(Nalam)* is had in "*Anubhuti*". "*Grant me*", was the prayer and "*was born*" is the fulfillment. ("*Sollaai*" is answered in "*Pirandhadhu*"). The prayer in verse 2 was made to Lord Murugan; He by whose love-grace God-experience was born in this verse is, again,

Lord Murugan. The order of the prayer and the fulfillment is also sequential: *Ellaam Ara; Yennai Izhandha; Nalam; Sollai — Aasaa Nigalam Thugal Aayina (Pin); Pesaa; Anubhuti; Pirandhadhu*.

Thus, this verse sums up the entire course of Sadhana, i.e., the entire instruction of the treatise, culminating in the Attainment. How beautifully Saint Arunagirinathar portrays in one verse everything about Sadhana and the Attainment — the soul's longing for God, total purity, prolonged Sadhana with love till Grace joins it, God's love for the soul, the dawn of His Grace that destroys the desire-chain, and the birth of the grand God-Experience in Maha-Mowna, *Peesa Anubhuti*!

It is interesting to note that referring to Valli, Arunagiri says '*Thoosamaniyum thugilum punaivaal*' (she who wears clean gems and clothes). Why did he not use the word 'Valli' or 'huntress', etc. like in all other verses earlier whenever he refers to Valli? Because, Valli represents the *Jivaatma* aspiring for union with God, which has been attained in the previous verse, by which all the vestures of individuality have gone *('ulagoodu urai .....ariyaamaiyum attraduve'*) and only the soul remains as a 'unit of pure Consciousness' -- '*Thoosamaniyum thugilum punaival*'. So, it is not 'that Valli', the huntress-girl (*Jivaatma*) anymore, but 'Valli Devi', pure consciousness, an integral part of the Infinite Consciousness, Brahman; Consort (Beloved) of Murugan, inseparable from Him. That is also the reason why there is no more reference to Valli (*Jivaatma*) in the remaining verses of the work.

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VERSE-44

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சாடும் தனிவேல் முருகன் சரணம்
சூடும்படி தந்தது சொல்லுமதோ
வீடும் சுரர்மாமுடி வேதமும் வெம்
காடும் புனமும் கமழும் கழலே.

Saadum thani vel murugan saranam,
Soodumpadi thanthathu chollumatho
Veedum surar maamudi vethamum vem— ,
Kaadum punamum kamazhum kazhale.

Murugan, the Great, with the Destroying, Peerless Vel,
Granted His Feet to be crowned, — O, what to tell!
Moksha, God's glorious heads, and the Vedas eternal,
Shine with the Feet, the hot forest and the fields as well.

"Lord Murugan, with the Incomparable and Vanquishing Vel, granted His Feet to be crowned on my head, --- The Feet that shine as (or the Feet whose divine fragrance is emitting/felt in) Moksha, on the heads of the Devas, in the Vedas, in the hot forest and the millet-fields!" --- Oh, How can I describe (this gracious act of His)!

Commentary

The unique experience of a Jivanmukta as he *emerges* from that '*Peesaa Anubhuti'* is portrayed in this verse. What he *experienced* while still immersed in that Samadhi (Verse-43) is mentioned in the first half of the verse as, "Lord Murugan, with

the Incomparable and Vanquishing Vel, '*granted* His Feet' to be crowned on my head; How can I describe this gracious act of His!" It is in the **past** tense. What he *experiences* as he emerges from that Samadhi is mentioned, in the second half of the verse, as "The Feet that *shine* as (or the Feet whose divine fragrance is emitting or felt in) Moksha, on the heads of the Devas, in the Vedas, in the hot forest and the millet-fields" (*Kamazhum Kazhal*). This is in the **present** tense.

This is the test for deciding whether an Experience is God Attainment or not -- What one experiences on emerging from any such experience -- does he feel the Presence of God everywhere? So, the experience of verse-28, however exalted, was not real God attainment, because in the next verse he himself says: '*Illeyenum Maayaiyil Ittanai, Ariyaamai poruththilai*', -- 'You have involved me in this non-existent Maya; not pardoned (destroyed) my Ignorance.'

Reference to the Feet is in many verses. But specific prayers were offered: (1) for the grant of the Feet to attain the 'non-thinking and non-forgetting state of Mukti' in verse-21, (2) to attain Mukti which will give freedom from Karmas in verse-35, and (3) for freedom from rebirth by attaining Liberation *here* and *now* (Jivanmukti) in verse-41. All these prayers are fulfilled in this verse. And as he emerged as a Jivanmukta, after being immersed in '*Peesaa Anubhuti'* in the previous verse, the Feet that were granted are experienced everywhere -- in Moksha, on the heads of the Devas, in the Vedas, in the hot forest and the millet-fields. This is the Jivanmukta's experience of the Omnipresence of God. He experiences God everywhere -- not only as the Absolute (Moksha), but also as the relative; not only 'There' (in heaven), but also 'Here' (in the forest and millet-fields); not only 'Then' when the Feet 'were' granted, but also 'Now' on emerging from that State of Mukti. By saying '*Kamazhum Kazhal*', the Saint

hints at the fact that the Feet that were granted, physical or visible, **then**, are experienced **now** as a felt-presence, like the fragrance of a flower.

'*Thani Vel'* in verse-42, '*Murugan*' in verse-43 and '*Charanam*' in verse-44 -- all these 3 represent the state of Moksha. This is confirmed in this verse by mentioning these three in the same order and that the Feet shine as Moksha, etc. And whose are those Feet that were granted? Of the Lord, whose Feet adorn the heads of Devas but Whose Head is adorned with the Feet of Valli Devi! This is an extraordinary gift of God. So he exclaims over this special favour, saying: "O! How can I describe this gracious act of His!"

Again, just as the instruction of verse-37 was seen fulfilled, in Toto, in verse-42 in respect of the VEL, the instruction of verse-14: "Kaivaai Kadir *Vel Murugan—Kazhal*--- pettru Uyivaai" is seen fulfilled in this verse, in the same order, in respect of The FEET, as: "Saadum Thani *Vel Murugan—Charanam*-- soodumpadi thanthathu"!

The three consecutive verses 42, 43 and 44 describe the state of Liberation, though in three different ways. Why should the attainment of the Goal be described in three verses? We do not know what the intention of Saint Arunagiri is! However, with our limited intellect, we may try to understand. It seems to be for two reasons:

(1) From the beginning of the work '*Kandar Anubhuti'*, we find a curious mixture of verses: (a) some are invocations to the Vel, (b) some are prayers for the grant of the Lord's Feet, and (c) some are prayers to the Lord Himself. Vel (*Jnana*) and Lord's Feet (*Bhakti*) go hand in hand to show that they are the same and non-different from the Lord Himself. To fulfill all

these three aspects, Saint Arunagiri seems to have chosen three verses.

(a) *Anubhuti* or God-Realisation is the theme of the work '*Kandar Anubhuti'*. Murugan, the Lord/God is the Goal to be Realised. In verse-2 the prayer was offered to Murugan to grant "that all-ceasing and mine-loosing 'Good'". And throughout the work, reference to the Lord as 'Murugan' is in the maximum number of verses (in 10 versrs) as compared to reference to any other Name of the Lord. So, Saint Arunagiri has devoted one verse to **Murugan** (Verse-43) and said that the *Pesaa Anubhuti* was attained by the grace of Murugan.

(b) In many verses, there are references and invocations to the *Vel*, which is identical with or non-different from the Lord, upon which an uninterrupted meditation was undertaken ('*vinai odavidum KadirVel maraven'*) till Realisation is attained, in verse-40. So, one verse is dedicated to the **Vel** (Verse-42).

(c) Again, prayers for the grant of the Lord's Feet, which also represent the state of *Mukti* or Liberation, were offered in several verses, particularly in verses 21 and 35, and climaxing in verse-41 for granting protection under His Feet *here* and *now* (Immediate Liberation) (*Jivanmukti*). So, one verse is dedicated for the grant of the **Lord's Feet** (verse-44).

Thus Saint Arunagiri has devoted three consecutive verses revealing the Liberation attained by the disciple. However, he chose to give importance to 'Murugan', to whom the earliest prayer was offered in verse-2 itself, and so placed verse-43 in the middle and employing the words 'Murugan' and '*Anubhuti'* in it, and flanked it by the other two verses (42 and 44), to show that *the Vel* and *the Lord's F*eet are identical with the Lord and represent the state of Liberation or Mukti.

(2) (a) Verse-42 details the process of meditation which leads to *entering into* and 'Being in' *Samadhi*, in which *Jivatva* or individuality is melted and dissolved. It is gone.

(b) Verse-43 describes the State of Being Immersed in or Experiencing *Samadhi* (*Anubhuti*). Here, the Absolute alone is -- Murugan.

(c) Verse-44 describes *being in Samadhi* and the experience while *emerging from* it, not as the individual (*Jiva*) which he was before but as a *Jivanmukta Purusha*, a universal being with a universal vision, feeling the presence of God everywhere, and intent on the welfare of all.

Thus the three verses describing the State of Samadhi portray the three stages: (1) of *entering* into Samadhi and being in it, (2) being *immersed* in Samadhi, and (3) being in Samadhi and *emerging* from it, respectively. A blessed experience -- grand and indescribable indeed!

On rising from the static identity (*Pesaa Anubhuti*), the realised soul beholds the Lord alone everywhere and in everything — high and low, above and below, heaven and earth, Absolute and relative; and he dances in joy. The Jiva is now a Jivanmukta — one in dynamic identity with God — as a result of the Feet having been granted. The prayers of verses 21, 35, and 41 are thus, seen to be fulfilled here, in their completeness.

Arunagirinathar says, "The Feet were granted." When were they granted? When the Vel was revealed (verse 42), the Feet were also granted because the two are simultaneous and non-different acts. But, he could not express it then, because at once all human faculties ceased (verse 42) and "*Pesaa Anubhuti*" was born (verse 43). And so, on emerging out of that Experience, he now recollects that gracious act of the Lord and exclaims over the same. Hence, this verse is at once an

exclamation over, a gratitude for, and an effect of, what has been granted in verse 42.

That the experience had in verse 28 is not complete realisation but only a glimpse of cosmic consciousness, while the experience of verse 43 is actual realisation, would become evident from what one feels on emerging from the respective experiences. On return to normal consciousness from that glimpse (verse-28), the Sadhaka's attitude was one of a sort of remorse, for he finds himself in (*Ille ennum*) Maya (verse 29), though this experience of Maya is not as bad as that of his in the earliest stage of Sadhana (verse 5). But on rising from *Pesaa Anubhuti* (Realisation) (verse-43), he experiences a sense of joy and feels God's Omnipresence, i.e., beholds the Lord's Feet everywhere. Again, even after that glimpse, Avidya persisted (*Ariyaamai Porutthilai;* verse 29), whereas here Avidya gets destroyed by the grand Experience (*Ariyaamai Attradhu*, verse 42; and *Aasaa Nigalam Thugal Aayina*, verse 43). Since only the ego was swallowed up, for the time being, in that glimpse-experience of verse 28 and its root (i.e., Avidya) was not destroyed, the instruction of verse 37 was to destroy the "ego to its root", i.e., Avidya.

Ariyaamai Attradhu (verse 42), *Pesaa Anubhuti Pirandhadhu* (verse 43), and *Saranam Thanthadhu* (verse 44) are all emphatic declarations of the attainment of the Goal. This group of verses has a special charm and significance. The Jiva (or individual) sheds its Jivatva and enters into God-Being (verse 42); Experiences or Becomes, i.e., Be, God (verse 43); and emerges as a God-Man (*Jivanmukta*) (verse 44). This verse portrays the joy of the Jivanmukta on his rising from God-Experience. These ideas are so beautifully hidden in these verses.

Now the Seeker has become a Siddha Purusha, a Jivanmukta Purusha, a Sage. He is no more a Jiva, an effort-

center; he has attained the Goal, and there is no more need for him to do conscious Sadhana. His existence itself is Sadhana, for it becomes natural and spontaneous, his inner awareness of Reality being unbroken and steady. Evidently, that is the reason why there is no mention of Valli (who represents the Jivatman) from this verse onwards. And so there is no need for any logical sequence of thoughts hereafter, as it was upto this time.

This is a simple verse in its meaning, but its implications are great and many-sided. Lord Murugan graciously offered His Feet to be crowned. This is the highest blessing conceivable, for it confers Moksha on the recipient, Feet and Moksha being the same. The Feet that are granted are those, for whose manifestation on the stony tablet of his heart he prayed (verse 6); meditation on which, while giving away one's possessions in charity, frees one from transmigration (verse 7); by obtaining which one can give up all one's desires and be saved, i.e., liberated (verse 14); the grant of which means the attainment of the non-thinking and non-forgetting state of Mukti (for which he prayed, verse 21); to bow to which feeling *Satchidananda*, is a great merit (*Tapas*), difficult of attainment (verse 22); non-thinking of which, due to the coming into active play of ignorance, is verily one's destruction (to overcome which was his prayer, verse 23); which alone are not red, i.e., Perfect, but He, whose they are, is Himself red in His whole being (verse 25); the grant of which was longed for to attain the state of Mukti and be freed from Karmas (verse 35); which Brahma and other gods adorn their heads with (verse 36); and protection under which *here* and *now* means *Jivanmukti*, which he aspired for (verse 41). Such Feet were crowned on his head.

When the Lord's Feet are granted, what happens? The bound soul at once gets liberated, the Sadhaka becomes a Siddha. To that blessed one, a new vision is opened up, as the Feet disclose their real nature. They shine as the Invisible, the visible, as well as the link between the two; as the Absolute, the

phenomenal, as also that which bridges them. Arunagirinathar describes the Feet as the self-luminous state of Moksha, as shining on the heads of the Devas in heaven, as the (essence of the) eternal Vedas, as the (tender) Feet that shine in the dry forest and fields. He uses the peculiar word "*Kamazhum Kazhal*", which does not easily lend itself to translation. It means "the sweet fragrance-wafting Feet, or the Feet that shine, or the Feet that reveal themselves." By this, what is meant is that the Feet granted were not merely visible and physical, but that their divine presence is felt in a subtle way and always. As the fragrance of a flower cannot be seen but sensed, so are the Lord's Feet not perceived physically but felt and experienced intuitively, by the realised soul. This is the significance of "*Kamazhum*" (shine or emit fragrance). Again, while the act of granting the Feet is in the past tense, as "granted" (*Thanthathu*), the Saint has used the present tense as "shine" (*Kamazhum*), in describing the nature of the Feet so granted. This also indicates that the Feet are not merely those that were placed on the heads of gods or walked over the forest and field in search of Valli, **then**, but that they are a **living presence** to the liberated ones. The mention of a few places where the Lord's Feet shine is only symbolic, and is meant to suggest their omnipresence. Arunagirinathar's selection of places is significant. Let us see where and how the Lord's Feet shine.

Moksha is the Goal of all human aspiration, attaining which life's purpose is fulfilled. It is the Consciousness of Absolute Freedom (Liberation). It is called *Parama-pada* — the Supreme Abode. It is the Divine Feet of the Lord. The Lord's Feet themselves shine as the very state of Moksha and Moksha stands for the Absolute.

The Lord's Feet shine on the heads of the Devas. The Eternal and the Formless manifested Itself as Lord Skanda to alleviate the sufferings of the Devas. When the Asura Surapadman, under whose tyranny the Devas were suffering,

was vanquished by the Lord, all the Devas worshipped Him and placed His Feet on their heads as a mark of respect and gratitude. Thus, His Feet shine on the heads of the Devas, i.e., in heaven. Those Feet which shine as the Absolute also shine in and as the higher regions (heaven).

The Feet do not merely shine as the Absolute and the higher regions, they are also the means of attaining them — the Vedas. The Vedas are the repository of wisdom. They are regarded as *Apaurusheya*, i.e., not man-made or composed by men, but as the revelations of the Supreme Being itself. The Vedas are not the written books but the wisdom Eternal, the ecstatic outpourings of the revelations of men of realisation. They have come down to us through the Guru-disciple tradition of hearing and reciting. Hence, the Vedas are called as *Sruti* (what is heard or revealed) as distinguished from *Smritis* which are the works of human origin. The Vedas extol God and exhort men to seek perfection. They are replete with *Upasanas* and *Vidyas* (meditations) of different kinds which are capable of bestowing upon the practitioner heaven as well as Moksha. As the Vedas are revelations of the Supreme Being and as they serve as means of attaining heaven or Moksha, they are regarded as the Feet of the Lord. The Lord's Feet, thus, shine as the Vedas. The Feet which shine as the Absolute and in the higher regions, shine as the Vedas also to serve as the means of attaining them.

This vast universe is the field created by God for the Jivas to undergo different experiences and thus evolve and finally attain Him. When the souls are ripe, drawn by their devotion, God manifests Himself on this earth plane to grant them Mukti. Valli's devotion drew Lord Skanda from His Abode to the millet-fields and the hot forest, over which He walked in search of His beloved. This is *Skanda-Lila* — the playful divine sport of Lord Skanda. The whole of creation, of which the earth is the immediate object of our experience, is at once a field for the

Lord's play and the Jiva's experience. It is the sporting ground and meeting place of Jiva and Isvara. This is so beautifully and symbolically brought out by Arunagirinathar in saying that the Lord's Feet shine in the hot forest and fields, as it is here that the Lord met Valli and accepted her. The Vedas say, God sacrificed Himself and became this universe, which is one *Paada* (foot) i.e., one-fourth, of the Supreme Being, three-fourth being Immortal and Eternal. The Lord's Feet shine as this universe.

Thus, as the Absolute, in the higher regions, as the Vedas and on the earth — the Lord's Feet shine everywhere. His Feet are the basis, the means, and the end.

By all this, Arunagirinathar brings out the Omnipresence of God, which is felt by the (realised) soul that is blessed with the Feet. When the Lord grants or confers His feet on one's head, one gets the cosmic vision of the Feet and beholds them everywhere. Though the act of placing the Feet may be done once, its effect of beholding them everywhere persists forever, because the Feet-grant means also Vel-revelation, which is an inner state of consciousness. Hence, Arunagirinathar uses the past tense for the act of granting the Feet, as "granted" (*Thanthatu*), but uses the present tense while describing the nature of the Feet that were so granted, as "shine" (*Kamazhum*).

So much regarding the glory of the Lord's Feet! What about His Vel? It is also equally great. We have seen earlier that the Feet and the Vel go together and that they are identical. This truth is so beautifully brought home in this verse where the Vel also is glorified by two epithets — "*Saadum*" and "*Thani*", i.e., "Vanquishing" and "Incomparable" — to indicate its relative and Absolute aspects.

The Vel is Incomparable; it is the Absolute; it is identical with the Lord Himself; it is Pure Consciousness, as seen in

verse 40. The "Incomparable" ("*Thani*"), therefore, refers to the Absolute aspect of the Vel. But it is not merely that; it is also the relative, it is "destroying", too. The Vel destroys what? It vanquished the proud Asura Surapadman with his kith and kin, and brought freedom to the Devas. The Asuras are the external enemies and are symbolic of the inner foes of the Sadhaka — *Avidya, Kama, and Karma*, which the Vel destroys. It manifests itself as Sadhana-Sakti, as the needed subtle understanding to pierce through Avidya. This "destroying" ("*Saadum*") is the Vel's relative aspect. And when ignorance is thus destroyed, it stands as Pure Consciousness. It manifests itself as the means of removing Avidya and when it is done, it remains by Itself as the Goal attained. The Vel is, thus, both the means as well as the End; the relative and the Absolute; dynamic as well as static; "*Saadum*" (destroying) and "*Thani*" (Incomparable).

It is in this rare verse that both the relative and Absolute aspects of both the Vel and the Feet are beautifully blended, with a specific intention, viz., to suggest that it portrays the condition of the realised soul (Jivanmukta). Only he has the unique privilege of a simultaneous experience of both the relative and Absolute aspects of Reality. Swami Sivananda says in his work '*Guru Tattwa*': "The Guru is verily a link between the individual and the Immortal. He is a being who has raised himself from *this* into *That*, and thus has a free and unhampered access into both the realms. He stands, as it were, upon the threshold of Immortality; and, bending down he raises the struggling individuals with his one hand, and with the other lifts them up into the *imperium* of everlasting joy and infinite Truth-Consciousness."

In the state of Samadhi (verse 42), the Vel is experienced as only the "*Thani*" (Incomparable) and the Feet as only the "*Neri*" (Moksha) — i.e., their Absolute aspects. On rising from Samadhi, as a Jivanmukta, they are experienced (as in this verse) in both their aspects — the Vel as not only the "*Thani*"

but also as "*Saadum*", and the Feet as not only Moksha ("*Veedu*") but also as the field and forest (physical plane) — i.e., in their Absolute and relative aspects. Thus, this verse makes clear that in the Vel-revelation of verse 42 is implied the Feet-grant also. But, while verse 42 is the experience of *Samadhi*, this verse is that of *Jivanmukti.*

The Vel-revelation of verse 42 and the Feet-grant of this verse are identical; they mean the same thing; i.e., the attainment of Mukti (Liberation). In verse 42, the state of Mukti ("*Neri*") was identified with the Vel, as "*Neriyai*" and "*Velai*". Now, the same Mukti ("*Veedu*") is identified with the Feet. The Vel-revelation and the Feet-grant are, therefore, simultaneous occurrences, though the former may be regarded as an inner awareness while the latter an external act.

In verse-21 the prayer was for the grant of the Feet, for attaining the state of non-thinking and non-forgetting (*Karutha maravaa neri*) i.e., Mukti. In verse-42 '*Kuriyaik kuriyaadu kuriththu ariyum Neri'* is the '*Thani Vel'*, which is also Mukti. This shows that the Lord's Feet and the Vel both mean Mukti.

While the uninterrupted meditation undertaken is on the Vel (verse 40), what is aspired to attain are the Feet (verse 41); while the prayer of verse 41 is, thus, for protection under the Feet, what is granted (or revealed) in response, in verse 42, is the Vel; and while the Vel is revealed in verse 42, what is wondered at as having been granted are the Feet (verse 44). How interchangeably does Arunagirinathar refer to the Vel and the Feet, to suggest their identity or non-difference! And to confirm this, in this verse, he brings the Vel and the Feet together, as "the Feet of the Lord Muruga who has the destroying, Incomparable Vel", in both their relative and Absolute aspects.

The state of knowing by thinking-without-thinking (verse 42) and the Speechless-Experience (verse 43) maybe regarded as *static identity* with God; i.e., actual experience of Samadhi, wherein all faculties cease. That one does not remain in that *Pesaa Anubhuti* (or state of Samadhi) but rises from it, and that even on emerging from it his "contact" with God is not severed but that he beholds Him everywhere, is mystically disclosed by this verse (verse 44). Hence, the condition described in this verse may be regarded as one of *dynamic identity*, i.e., the perpetual experience of God of a Jivanmukta on emerging out of the Samadhi-experience. Only those blessed souls that come down from the zenith of God-Experience can guide the world. They are the rare ones who are vested with a divine command as also the needed extraordinary power to fulfill the divine mission. This is seen in the lives of such great souls as Ramakrishna Paramahamsa, Ramana Maharishi, Swami Sivananda, Aurobindo and many others.

Thus, though the meaning of the verse is simple, its implications are profound and many-sided.

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VERSE-45

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கரவாகிய கல்வியுளார் கடைசென்று
இரவாவகை மெய்ப்பொருள் ஈகுவையோ
குரவா குமரா குலிசாயுத குஞ்-
சரவா சிவயோக தயாபரனே.

Karavaakiya kalviulaar kadai senru,
Iravaa vakai meyipporul eekuvaiyo
Kuravaa kumaraa kulisaayutha kunj-
Charavaa sivayoga thayaaparane.

Not to approach men, who their learning conceal,
And beg of them, will You grant me Wisdom Eternal?
O Lord with Vajraayudha! O Kumara! O Teacher Spiritual!
O Deivayanai's Lord! O Granter of Yoga, the Grace all full!

"O Guru Divine! O Lord Kumara! O Lord wielding the weapon *Vajra*! O Consort of Deivayani! O Embodiment of Grace Who grants Siva-Yoga! Wilt Thou graciously grant me the Wisdom of the Supreme Reality, in order that it may obviate the need to approach and beg at the doors of those who conceal their learning! (Kindly grant me.)"

Commentary

Though as a Sadhaka, one's goal is the attainment of that "Good" which is God (verse 2), God has a definite mission for him to fulfill when he has attained the Goal. He whom God has made a realised soul (Jivanmukta), from and through him will

God naturally get His work done. Thus, the task of spiritual ministering is ordained to the Jivanmukta to whom God has given that Experience (verses 42 to 44).

The liberated soul who attains to the state of 'Speechless-Experience' (*Pesaa Anubhuti*) does not usually remain absorbed in it but rises from it and moves about freely. His exalted state is hard to understand and beyond the imagination of ordinary human beings like us. He has a Divine mission to fulfil, that of guiding the aspirants. Just as God came as his Guru and guided him when he was a Sadhaka, God now works through him to minister for the spiritual needs of other seekers or Sadhakas. Hence saints, sages and Jivanmuktas are regarded as representatives of God or moving divinities on earth. Thus he moves about freely, giving spiritual instruction to those that seek his guidance. The instructions and their methods naturally vary in accordance with the needs of those that seek. Hence there is no need for continuity in the ideas of verses 45 to 50. But these verses are of a special type. They are unique and highly instructive. They reveal the exalted spiritual moods and attitudes of a Jivanmukta, who is always in God-awareness, to whom seeking souls resort for guidance; they naturally vary, but form solid advices to seekers. Hence, we will find something peculiar in each of these verses. These verses reveal high spiritual truths. They convey deep meaning and contain secret clues for meditation; they provide valuable guidance to seekers. Hence these are exceptionally grand. The instructions of these verses may be regarded as those of the Jivanmukta or Arunagiri himself or of any saint. Arunagiri exhibits his extraordinary skill of explaining the different types of Yoga to attain the Goal, in theses verses.

"O Guru Divine! O Lord Kumara! O Lord wielding the weapon Vajra! O Consort of Deivayani! O Embodiment of Grace Who grants Siva-Yoga! Wilt Thou graciously grant me

the Wisdom of the Supreme Reality, so that it may obviate the need to approach and beg at the doors of those who conceal their learning."

The Jivanmukta, who has realised God as the Divine Guru, as an embodiment of unbounded grace and the granter of Siva-Yoga, feels pity over the lot of those who approach men of learning (bereft of wisdom) who are reluctant to part with their knowledge, instead of seeking from God Who is the repository of Wisdom. Here is, therefore, his exhortation to seekers to pray to the Lord, the granter of Siva-Yoga, for Wisdom. The Lord will see that you get the needed Wisdom either through books, or by Satsanga, or attending some spiritual discourse and He will come as the Guru and instruct you at the appropriate time, as mentioned in verse-17.

The Jivanmukta's advice to all is to seek Divine Wisdom from God, which is the essence of all learning, to avoid the need to go to and beg of Pundits (or men of learning) who hide their knowledge. It is not that he is against learning, but he disapproves of the idea of approaching those who are unwilling to part with what they possess. Learning is necessary. It is also a gift of God. The learning we have (from books and teachers) and our Knowledge (that dawns from within) are both from the Lord (verse 17). Hence, learning as such is not bad, but learning that loses sight of its purpose at the hands of unspiritual pedantics is what is disapproved by the saint.

The great law is: "Give and it shall be given back to you ten-fold, hundred-fold, manifold." Especially in the case of knowledge, one does not lose by giving, for it is such a thing that it cannot diminish by sharing. On the other hand, it increases the more it is imparted, as water from a spring in the river-bed wells up the more it is extracted. Wealth, food, etc., deplete when given to others, and these can satisfy the

recipients only for a limited time. But the charity of knowledge (or *Jnana-daanam*) is a lasting one. Neither the giver loses anything by giving nor the recipient loses it at any time. Both are benefited forever. The glory of *Jnana-daanam* is, therefore, greater than that of all other charities. Why, then, hide what one knows? Yet, generally men of learning do not easily impart their knowledge to others. They conceal it not knowing that God also will hide Himself from them.

Why do people hide their learning? They are afraid that their "business" may be affected if they impart it to others. Those who utilise their knowledge as a means of acquiring wealth, position, fame, power, etc., do not wish to impart it to others, lest the latter should compete with them. But the purpose of learning is something else. It is, as Thiruvalluvar says, "To worship (attain) God." Those who direct their knowledge to its true purpose, viz., to attain God, never hesitate to share what they know with honest seekers. Such noble souls are the Gurus, who are kind and compassionate by their very nature, from whom knowledge is to be sought.

Pray to the Lord for Wisdom Supreme, for it can be granted by Him alone. Men of learning can give bookish knowledge, i.e., mere information, but not Wisdom, for they themselves lack it. After all, one has to go to someone, whether for learning or Wisdom. Then, why go to men; why not pray to the Lord Himself? And how beautifully the Saint contrasts the nature of men of learning with that of the Lord! They hide what they have, though what they possess is not the highest Knowledge, but only bookish learning. On the other hand, the Lord is the granter of Siva-Yoga. Siva-Yoga (or Siva-Jnana) is the supreme state of non-dual Consciousness and God alone is capable of giving it. Also, He is an embodiment of grace and mercy. He is ever ready to give to those who really want it, if they approach with sincerity, in the proper manner.

One may wonder as to how to approach the Lord for wisdom? Guru is God, we have seen. So the Lord is addressed as Guru, because it is God who comes in a human form in response to one's sincerity and longing, at the appropriate time. God Himself is the real Guru of all. Hence, no distinction is to be made between God and Guru. That God Himself comes as our Guru is known only by those to whom it is revealed by His grace (verse 13).

Now, how to recognise a Guru, is the next problem of seekers. On this, Swami Sivananda says: "Here are the characteristics of a real Guru. If you find these qualifications in any man, accept him at once as your Guru. 'A real Guru is one who is a *Brahma-Nishtha* (established in Brahman) and a *Brahma-Srotriya* (well-versed in scriptures). He has full knowledge of the Self and the Vedas. He can dispel the doubts of aspirants. He has equal vision and balanced mind. He is free from *Raaga-Dvesha* (likes and dislikes), Harsha (joy), Shoka (grief), egoism, anger, lust, greed, moha (attachment), pride, etc. He is an ocean of mercy. In his mere presence, one gets *Shanti* (peace) and elevation of mind. In his mere presence, all doubts of aspirants are cleared. He does not expect anything from anybody. He has an exemplary character. He is full of joy and bliss. He is in search of real aspirants.'

"Mere study of books cannot make one a Guru. One who has studied the Vedas and who has direct knowledge of the Atman through *Anubhava* (Experience) can only be enrolled as a Guru. A Jivanmukta (liberated sage) is the real Guru (spiritual preceptor). He is the Sat-Guru. He is identical with Brahman (the Supreme Self). He is a Knower of Brahman."

Herein also is the difference between learning and Wisdom of Reality.

There is a lot of difference between studying under a spiritual master (Guru) and men of learning. As the Guru is a Brahma-Srotriya and a Brahma-Nishtha, apart from his mastery over scriptures, his teachings will have the magical touch of personal experience, as he has already trodden the path, while those of learned men will be dry. Also, doubts and difficulties of various kinds will arise in the course of Sadhana, which have to be cleared then and there. This is possible only for a Guru, as he has undergone them personally. Thus, is the supreme importance of a Guru for seekers of Truth.

Guru being God Himself, the contrast made in this verse seems to be between real Gurus who are kind and compassionate and dry Pundits who conceal and are miserly.

'Kumara' means the Lord of eternal youth. It also means one who destroys evils. The Guru is the real Kumara — his beauty consists in his possession of divine wisdom; and he has powers to destroy the evils (Avidya, etc.) of the seeker.

'Kulisa' is a weapon in one of the twelve hands of the Lord. It is with this weapon that the Lord killed the Asura Simhamukhan, the younger brother of Surapadman. As the Lord has the Kulisa weapon, He is Kulisaayudha. Kulisa is also the weapon of Indra.

'Kunjara' means elephant. Deivayanai, the daughter of Indra, was brought up by Indra's divine elephant, Airavata. Hence, she is called Kunjari. As Lord Skanda is the consort of Deivayanai or Kunjari, He is called Kunjarava. Also, as the Lord has an elephant, by name Pinimukha, as His Vahana (vehicle), He is called Kunjarava.

Kulisa (or Vajra) is the weapon of Indra, too. Hence, Indra also goes by the name of Kulisaayudha. "Kulisayudha Kunjarava" may, therefore, be taken together, meaning "Lord

Skanda, who has as His consort Indra's daughter Kunjari or Deivayanai."

One may wonder as to why a reference to Deivayani is made in this verse? Perhaps, because Valli (the Jivatman) has attained the Lord and become His consort, -- Valli Devi -- (verse-43), where She finds Her elder sister with the Lord!

It is interesting to note that in the entire work of Kandar Anubhuti, there is reference to Deivayanai in this solitary verse. Perhaps, Arunagirinathar felt that a reference to Deivayanai would make the list of all connected with the Lord and His divine family complete, in the work 'Kandar Anubhuti', as there is referenc to all the others, viz., Lord Siva, Uma Devi, Lord Ganesha, Valli, the Vel, the Peacock and the Cock.

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VERSE-46

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எந்தாயும் எனக்கருள் தந்தையும் நீ
சிந்தாகுலம் ஆனவை தீர்த்து எனையாள்
கந்தா கதிர்வேலவனே உமையாள்
மைந்தா குமரா மறைநாயகனே.

Enthaayum enakkarul thanthaiyum nee,
Sinthaakulam aanavai theertthu enaiyaal
Kandaa kathir velavane umaiyaal,
Mainthaa kumaraa marai naayakane.

Thou art my Mother as also the Father, that bestow grace,
Pray, accept me, removing all my mental afflictions;
O Skanda! O Lord with Vel Luminous! O Darling Uma's!
O Kumara! O Glorious Lord of the Immortal Vedas!

"O Lord Skanda! O Lord with the Self-Luminous Vel! O Son of Uma Devi! O Kumara! O Lord of the Vedas! Thou art my gracious Mother as well as my Father. Remove all my mental afflictions and 'accept' me into Thy fold."

Commentary

This is a very powerful prayer to ward off one's afflictions and draw divine grace. This verse is an advice given to seekers to remove their mental afflictions and confusions in Sadhana.

The saint wants us to assert our true relationship with God, i.e., He is our real and gracious Mother and Father, our very

Self, and we have to resort to Him for the removal of all our afflictions and granting us refuge. The removal of suffering is not for enjoying a comfortable life here but for (*'yenai aal'*) attaining Him and to enjoy everlasting Bliss. He is to be approached with a parental kinship, as the Universal Self, as our closest and not as an extra-cosmic (or other-worldly) being.

The prayer in this verse is simple and direct, but it reveals one's true intimacy with the Lord. Such verses are the outcome of the oneness felt with God by Self-realised souls. The Jivanmukta feels his closeness to the Lord so much that he claims his rightful kinship with Him. Hence, he says, "O Lord, You are my gracious Mother and Father." Swami Sivananda says: "God alone is your real father, mother, friend and Guru. Realise God now and here, and be happy forever."

The saint reveals the cause of our mental afflictions as also the way to annihilate them and "be accepted" by the Lord. God is our Mother and Father; and He is ever ready to bless us. Our real kinship is with God, the Atman within. God is the universal Reality behind all the particulars (Jivas). He is ever beckoning us from within. But we ignore God and run after the objects of the world thinking that they can give us happiness. In this erroneous attempt, we suffer endlessly afflicted by desire, anger, greed, etc. The only way to get out of this predicament is to go back to God, renouncing the erroneous attitude developed towards the objects. This is done by recognising the Motherhood and Fatherhood of God — the universal nature of God (or the Atman). Not to recognise the universal Reality that is behind all the particulars, but to regard the particulars themselves as reals, is our fundamental mistake and the cause of all our mental afflictions.

This verse seems to have greater implications."God is my gracious Mother as well as my Father." How can one person be both the father and mother? This seems to be strange; but that is

the Divine mystery and the clue for our liberation. In the worldly sense, the father and mother are two different persons; the father is not the mother and vice-versa. Evidently, the child is a third one, i.e., different from and other than the parents! But in the spiritual sphere things are quite different. This new vision of illumined souls (Jivanmuktas) is given in this verse. To them, God is the Father as well as the Mother. How? As the Absolute Para Brahman, God is the Father. As Maya, the inscrutable and inseparable power of Brahman, He is the Mother. As He Himself is the Father and Mother, the children, i.e., the Jivas and the world, are also He only. The Jivas and this creation are all, on ultimate analysis, nothing but Brahman itself. Thus, the non-dual concept of the Ultimate Reality is revealed when Arunagirinathar says that God is our Father as well as the Mother.

In the Gita, the Lord says, "My womb is the great Brahma, in that I place the germ; thence, O Arjuna, is the birth of all beings. Whatever forms are produced, O Arjuna, in any womb whatsoever, the great Brahma is their womb and I am the seed-giving Father" (XIV-3 & 4). The great Brahma (*Mahat-Brahma*) referred to by the Lord is the *Mula Prakriti* (or Primordial Nature), which is also known as *Avyakta* (or the Unmanifest). The Sankhyas call it *Prakriti*; the Vedantins call it *Maya*.

But there is a peculiarity with Maya. While Prakriti is a second and eternal reality other than the Purusha, Maya is not so. Maya is a mystery. It is a term employed to solve the riddle of the universe in which the Jiva finds itself, as we introduce an "x" in solving algebraical sums. There is no "why" and "what" of Maya, even as in the case of "x"; its necessity is to solve our difficulty — the problem. When the sum is solved, which is the purpose, the "x" vanishes as it was only supposed for the purpose of solving the sum. So is Maya. It is resorted to only to explain our present predicament — the Jiva's inability to

understand the relation between the Absolute and the relative; between the Invisible and the visible; between Reality and appearance; between what is and what appears to be — in short, between God, world, and itself. When Reality is experienced in the immediacy of one's own experience, the problem of this mysterious relation is solved and with it Maya disappears; non-dual Brahman alone remains — the God who is Father as well as the Mother. Hence, a true understanding of the nature of God and our relation to Him, i.e., that of Maya, is the only means of freedom from suffering. Else we will be, as we are now, in misery.

If a student does not know the principle and the technique of employing "x" in a sum, he will only complicate the matter and will find himself caught up in a big mess instead of getting a solution for the sum. It is not unusual to see students endlessly working a sum, wasting sheets of paper and hours, where the sum could be solved in a few minutes. Thus, while "x" can help solve the problem quickly, easily and correctly, if employed properly; it can also make one get giddy and puzzled, if the technique is not correctly learnt and understood from a teacher and employed wisely. So is the case with Maya. Those fortunate ones who are gifted with the needed subtle understanding and the guidance of the spiritual Master understand this mystery behind Maya, cross over it and realise God. Others find themselves in a mess, asking hundreds of questions about it, raising objections against it, not knowing that thereby they only get more entangled in it. It is purely Guru/God's grace that can save one from this miserable situation. Hence, Arunagirinathar says, "My grace-bestowing Father, too, art Thou." Lord Krishna also says in the Gita, "Verily, this divine Maya of Mine, made up of the (three) *Gunas* (of Nature) is difficult to cross over; those who take refuge in Me alone cross over this Maya (through My Grace)" (VII-14).

It is grace (*Arul*) that reveals things in their true perspective. When that grace is not there, the Jivas (minds) are afflicted with varieties of pain and suffering, because they do not understand this divine mystery of Maya, i.e., their true relation to God and the world. They regard themselves as separate from God, and the world as a real entity outside God, with which an objective relationship is to be established. This wrong notion is the cause of all one's mental afflictions. And so the prayer is for the removal of this wrong notion and to re-absorb us into God. Addressing God as both the Mother and Father is to suggest that God is non-dual, which also means the non-differentiation of Jivas and the cosmos from God. This frees the Jiva from externality-consciousness whereby it is freed from all mental afflictions; and enables the Jiva to rest in God, which is to be accepted by Him or absorbed in Brahman. By all this, what seems to be implied is that the secondless Brahman alone exists, that as long as duality is experienced the Jiva's afflictions cannot cease, and that to be freed from afflictions the Jiva has to recognise its true relation with the non-dual Brahman, i.e., become (or be one with) Brahman.

The nature of the Lord (or the Atman) with whom we have to re-establish (or recognize) our kinship is graphically given in the verse. He is addressed as Skanda — the scorcher of enemies; the enemies of lust, greed, anger, etc., which are the causes of one's mental afflictions. Again, He is the *Kathir Velavan* (Lord with the Self-Luminous Vel). It refers to the Self-revealing nature of the Atman. The Atman is a mass of Consciousness (or Light) that destroys the darkness of Avidya (ignorance). He is also the Son of Uma Devi — the Tejas (Light) that emanated from the third eye of Lord Siva, which finally assumed the form of Lord Skanda whom Uma Devi took and nursed. He is also Kumara, the remover of the world-delusion. And, finally, He is the Lord of the Vedas, the revealer

of Wisdom, to "accept" the soul that is, thus, purified of Avidya.

Thus, in this simple verse, which moves one to tears when recited even once with a sincere heart, Arunagirinathar shows the way, i.e., to make a direct appeal to the Lord in a spirit of great intimacy with Him. We have almost to demand of the Lord the destruction of the afflictions of the mind and to "accept" us, as a child would demand from its parents. How? First declare and affirm our kinship with the Lord, saying: "Thou art my Mother and Father, too," and not: "Art Thou not my Mother and Father?" Thus make the way clear, and then demand our acceptance. Parents cannot reject the child's demands. The child does insist on its demands and gets them fulfilled from its parents.

What Saint Arunagirinathar says of the Lord in this verse compares favourably with what Lord Krishna says of Himself, in the Gita, "I am the Father of the world, the Mother, the Dispenser of the fruits of actions and the Grandfather; the (one) thing to be known, the Purifier, the sacred monosyllable 'OM' and also the Rik, the Saama, and the Yajur-Vedas" (IX-17).

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VERSE-47

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ஆறாறையும் நீத்து அதன்மேல் நிலையைப்
பேறா அடியேன் பெறுமாறு உளதோ
சீறா வருசூர் சிதைவித்து இமையோர்
கூறா உலகம் குளிர்வித்தவனே.

Aaraaraiyum neetthu athanmel nilaiyaip
Peraa adiyen perumaaru ulatho
Seeraa varusoor sithaivitthu imaiyoor,
Kooraa ulagam kulirvitthavane.

Transcending six-six, that state which is beyond,
Am I blessed to attain that as my fortune grand?
Destroying Surapadma, who rose angrily to fight,
O Lord, You made heaven the Devas', duly cooling it!

"O Lord Skanda! You killed the Asura Surapadma, who rose against You hissing in anger (to attack), and restored the Devas (who were tortured by the Asura) to (their original abode of) heaven, cooling it and making it again as theirs. Transcending the thirty-six Tattvas, will I be blessed to attain as my fortune divine that Supreme State which is beyond? (Pray, grant me.)"

Commentary

This is a complicated verse which yields many interpretations, revealing Saint Arunagiri's skill to compress so much in a few words. In short, he says that:

(1) the Supreme Reality which is beyond the 36 *Tattwas*, **OR**, (2) Brahman which is beyond the six religious divisions (cults) of Hinduism, **OR,** (3) the Absolute (Siva) which is beyond the six Chakras,
is the blessed Goal that should be aspired for and attained.

In this verse the Jivanmukta advices seekers to aspire for the highest Realisation of non-dual Awareness which is beyond phenomenality, by transcending the thirty-six Tattvas. A detailed account of the 36 Tattvas is to be found in the text books of both the Saiva Siddhanta and Sakti cults, though with a slight difference. We shall, however, here confine ourselves to the bare details, according to the Saiva Siddhanta philosophy. The 36 Tattvas are:

(1) **Atma (soul) Tattvas or Asuddha Tattvas — 24.** They are:

(a) 5 *Karma Indriyas* (Organs of Action) — hands, feet, speech, anus, and generative organ;

(b) 5 *Jnana Indriyas* (Organs of Perception) — ears, skin, eyes, tongue, and nose;

(c) 5 *Mahaa-Bhutas* (Gross elements) — earth, water, fire, air, and ether;

(d) 5 *Tanmatras* (Suble elements) — smell, taste, color, touch, and sound; and

(e) 4 *Antahkaranas* (Internal organs) — mind, intellect, ego, and Chitta.

(2) Vidya Tattvas or Suddha-Asuddha Tattvas — 7.

They are: *Kaala*, *Niyati*, *Kalaa*, *Vidya*, *Raaga*, *Purusha*, and *Mulaprakriti* or *Maya.*

(3) Siva Tattvas or Suddha Tattvas — 5.

They are: Suddha Vidya (Rudra), Isvara (Maheshwara), Saadaakhya (Sadasiva), Bindu (Sakti), and Nada (Siva).

While the Saiva Siddhanta and the Sakti cults recognise 36 Tattvas, with slight difference, the Vedanta and Sankhya systems recognise 24 Tattvas, with a little variation. According to one calculation, the 36 Tattvas of the Saiva Siddhanta and the 24 Tattvas of the Vedanta are both further sub-divided into 96. Tattvas mean "principles" or "categories" or "reals"; not absolutely but phenomenally real. Tattvas are the fundamental rudimentary principles with which the metaphysics of any system of philosophy is built. Hence, each system of philosophy enumerates these Tattvas differently, though their purpose is the same — to show the evolution and involution of the cosmos which provides the necessary field for the Jivas to work out their Karmas and thus attain Liberation. But God (or the Supreme Being) is beyond phenomenality; being the Absolute Reality, He stands transcending the Tattvas, whatever may be their number. Thus, while the phenomenal world of Tattvas is a relative reality, the Supreme Being is the Absolute Reality; and the liberation of the Jiva lies in its going beyond (or transcending) the Tattvas or relative reality and be one with the Absolute Reality.

Now, the Tattvas, whether 24, 36, or 96, are only evolutes of the one primordial Maya (or *Avyakta* or the Unmanifest). This gets divided into Sattva, Rajas, and Tamas (or Suddha, Suddha-Asuddha, and Asuddha), etc., which further sub-divide themselves. Though the ramifications may vary, liberation lies in their transcendence because the Supreme Reality is beyond them.

What is the relation between the Supreme Reality and the Tattvas (or the phenomenally 'reals') is an intriguing question. The Supreme Reality (being Absolute or Infinite) cannot admit of anything else; and therefore, everything else can be nothing

but its condition, as the waves, ripples, etc., in the ocean. The Tattvas are nothing but waves and ripples in the ocean of Absolute Consciousness-Existence, i.e., they are conditions of Consciousness itself. This vast universe itself is considered as a wave in the ocean of Infinity. The *Ashtavakra Gita* says: "Knowing yourself to be That where universes throb like waves in the ocean, why do you run about like a miserable being" (III.3). "Let the wave of the universe rise or vanish of itself in me, the Infinite great ocean; I neither increase nor decrease thereby" (VII.2). The Jiva's perception of the world is, therefore, like one condition envisaging another condition, one wave another. Hence, it is said that Reality envisaged through the senses is the world of objects. Thus, we may say that the Tattvas are nothing but phases of Consciousness Itself, i.e., the objectified nature of Consciousness (or becoming-consciousness) in different levels. When this becoming (or objectification) is transcended (or sublated/resolved into Being or universalisation) by non-objectification, Reality is what it is, which is Being-Consciousness.

Now, how to transcend the Tattvas? Is it to leave the Tattvas here and go to where they are not? No; because wherever one might go, one will still be within the Tattvas only. Where going is involved, it means it is in space and time which are Tattvas. Hence, to transcend the Tattvas should connote something different altogether. It means the sublation (or resolving) of the Tattvas from their phenomenality into their Original State of Being. What does this mean? This can be understood by a study of our dream experience. In dream, something very mysterious happens to the mind. We see in dream almost everything of the waking world — there is the subject, the objects, the space that separates them, elements, etc., etc. The one waking mind appears to divide itself into the perceiving subject and the objects that are experienced in dream. But does anything really happen to the mind? No. And,

to transcend the dream-world, has the dream-subject to run hither and thither or do anything in the dream itself? No. Because whatever it might do, it is still in dream only. So, it has only to wake up. The mind (or consciousness), which has divided and objectified itself, has only to withdraw itself, by thinking differently, and be conscious of what it is — which is called waking. In waking, the entire contents of the dream-world are unified into a single consciousness, i.e., everything of the dream-content becomes the single waking-mind from which they ramified, but in a sublated form. The swiftly running water, the hard stone, the vast sky, the perceiving subject, etc., of dream lose their respective characteristics (or Tattvatva) and become a single consciousness in waking. It is not that the dream objects have become something else in waking; the waking consciousness which objectified itself into dream, now freed from the objectification, is what it always is. Thus, in waking, the different objects (Tattvas) of the dream-world not only lose their Tattvatva (or object-ness), but also become and be what they always are. Just as dream is transcended into waking, even so there is another transcendence from this long-dream of world-perception into universal waking of God-Consciousness. In this God-Consciousness, what now appears as objects (Tattvas) get transformed into and are experienced as phases of Consciousness in its universal condition. Just as maintaining the dream-subject-hood and moving about in dream itself is not the way to transcend dream, but to wake up; so also to transcend the Tattvas, giving up the Jiva-consciousness and waking up into universal consciousness is the only way, by withdrawal of consciousness into its Source, which is attained by meditation on the One Reality. The Supreme Reality is *Paaramaarthika Sattaa* (Absolute Reality); the world of Tattvas is *Vyavahaarika Sattaa* (Phenomenal Reality); and the dream-world is the *Praatibhaasika Sattaa* (Apparent Reality).

Of course, no amount of explanation can be adequate in this respect. Why? Because, it is a mystery! Can we explain how we descend into dream? Explanations are there as to how and why dreams occur; but not how we descend into it. Suddenly, we find ourselves in dream, yet not knowing that it is dream that we are experiencing! Everything looks real. Again, how and when we wake up from the dream is also not known. Suddenly, we wake up and then only come to realise that we were dreaming. Similarly, how this creation has proceeded from the Absolute, how we are in our present state of perception of Tattvas, and how and when we transcend them and attain Liberation is all a mystery. Everything seems to be beyond human understanding and baffles the frail human intellect when pushed to logical limits. Even causality itself seems to be unintelligible, finally. The whole mystery is solved only when the Absolute is realised by the grace of God, which is the Mystery of all mysteries! Hence, Arunagirinathar's wonderment, "Will I be blessed to attain that Supreme State which is beyond, by transcending the Tattvas?" And in it is implied its achievement because it is Lord Skanda's nature (*Svabhava*) to restore everything to its original state, to which aspect of the Lord is the appeal in this verse made, very appropriately

Heaven is the abode of the Devas. But Surapadman who obtained, as a result of his severe Tapas (or austerities), unlimited powers as boon from Lord Siva, invaded Svargaloka (heaven), set fire to it, captured the Devas, and subjected them to humiliations of various kinds. The afflicted Devas prayed to Lord Siva for help, who gave Lord Skanda to lead them and destroy the Asura Surapadman. In the fight that ensued, the Asura attacked Skanda assuming different forms through his power of Maya, and the Lord who is beyond the tricks of Maya destroyed each form which Surapadman took successively. Finally, finding his tricks to be of no avail, the Asura decided to

attack the Lord, who was yet a boy, with his physical might and bear Him down. When he so rose against the Lord with great fury, the Lord threw His Vel and destroyed Surapadman. Skanda, then, released all the Devas from imprisonment, and ordered Visvakarma — the divine architect — to remake Svargaloka. In obedience to the Lord's command, he made it more beautiful than before. Skanda restored Indra and other Devas to their rightful posts. Thus, the Lord cooled the agonised hearts of the Devas as also the Svargaloka that was burnt by Surapadman and made it, once again, the abode of the Devas, whose rightful share it was.

The original abode of the Jivas is God. The Jivas have, somehow, forgotten their essential nature of Satchidananda and are wandering in this forest of Samsara and are being scorched by the fire of Tattvas. To forget one's true nature, to see multiplicity where One alone is, is the cause of the Jiva's suffering. It has to transcend this condition and be what it is, in its pristine condition of Absolute Consciousness. For this blessed State, is the prayer: "O Lord Skanda! Due to the Asura of Avidya (ignorance) who has driven me out of my abode of Satchidananda, I am caught up in and scorched by the Tattvas. As you destroyed Surapadman, cooled the hearts of the Devas and heaven, and restored them back to heaven, pray have mercy on me and restore me to my Original Abode by destroying the Asura of Avidya (ignorance) and thus, cool my heart with the bliss of Satchidananda."

The verse is also interpreted differently, as the phrase "*Aaraaru*" in the first line yields different meanings. The phrase is composed of two words, "*Aaru*" and "*Aaru*"; and the word "*Aaru*" has many meanings, viz., the number six, river, path, 2 methods, means, religion, etc. Hence, when the meaning "six" is taken for both the words, it means six into six, (6 x 6) i.e., 36, which usually refers to the Tattvas and this usage is widely

prevalent in the Tamil literature. We have already seen this interpretation. The other interpretations of "*Aaraaru*" are:

1. The first "Aaru" is taken in its meaning of "six" and the second as "religion"; and the translation would then be: "Transcending the six religious cults, am I blessed to attain, as my fortune divine, that Supreme State (of Brahman) which is beyond (the concepts of the six religious cults)?"

The six major cults (or sects of Hinduism) are known as *Shanmata.* They are: (i) Saivam; (ii) Vaishnavam; (iii) Saaktam; (iv) Gaanapatyam; (v) Kaumaaram; and (vi) Souram. These cults/sects, respectively, conceive of the Supreme Being as Lord Siva, Lord Vishnu, Devi or Goddess Sakti, Lord Ganapati (Ganesha), Lord Skanda (Kumara), and Lord Surya (Sun).

Reality is One. It is Truth, Knowledge, and Infinity. It is Brahman. The six cults were instituted by the Adwaita-Guru Shankaracharya as different approaches to suit to the tastes and temperaments of different individuals as it is difficult to approach Reality as It is. Thus, Lord Siva, etc., are the six concepts of the same Reality, and the six cults of Saivam, etc., are the six modes of approach to the One Reality. It is to be noted that Reality Itself (God) has no religion or cult; it is beyond all religions — not only the above-mentioned six cults, but also all the religions of the world. Religion is for man, not for God; and Reality does not belong to any religion.

The different religions are, therefore, variegated approaches to the same Reality, and the personal Gods of religions, such as Lord Siva, etc., have a significant purpose to serve. They, being facets of Reality, are the points of convergence of the Absolute (or the Universal) and they form, as it were, entrances to the Absolute. They are tentative concepts of Reality and have to be transcended, finally. This should not be lost sight of and aspirants should not cling to

personal Gods, as if they are the ultimate state itself, since all forms get sublimated in the Supreme Being, just as all rivers merge into the same ocean, losing their names and forms.Guru Totapuri's instruction to Sri Ramakrishna Paramahamsa to transcend the concept of *Kaali* (Divine Mother) is worth remembering here. Hence, whichever religion one may follow, Reality has to be realised finally, and that is the purpose of religions. That the Goal to be aspired for and realised is the Absolute (or Brahman), and not the personal Gods themselves, though the latter are necessary steps in the ascent, is what the saint implies in saying "that Supreme State which is beyond, transcending the six-cults."

It is very interesting to note that Saint Arunagirinathar, though a staunch devotee of Lord Skanda, was a great synthesiser of cults. It can be seen from his *Thiruppugazh* songs that he has devoted many verses in singing the glory and greatness of Lord Siva, Lord Vishnu, the Divine Mother, and other Gods in exquisite and inspiring language. Arunagirinathar was a votary of Advaitam — a sage of the highest non-dual Realisation. To him, Lord Skanda was not merely a personal God (or a facet of the Absolute), but the Absolute Itself; as revealed in verse 13 and in one of his Thiruppugazh songs as "Lord Skanda -- The Truth of the six cults and philosophies" (*Aru Samaya Saattirap Porulone*). It is this attitude, this approach, that he wants us all to have towards our respective Gods. The Goal is the Absolute, that Supreme State which is beyond, whatever be one's concept of God, whatever be one's religion, is the Saint's instruction, expressed in the form of this aspiration.

2. The first "*Aaru*" is "six" and the second "*aaru*" is "Chakras", as stages in the path of Kundalini. The translation would then be: "Transcending the six Chakras, am I blessed to attain, as my fortune divine, that Supreme State (of Realisation in the *Sahasraara*) which is beyond (the six Chakras)?" Though

the word "Aaru" does not directly mean the Chakras, it is implied and derived, as they form the stages in the passage of the Kundalini Sakti, and such a usage is to be found in the Tamil literature — in verse 2419 of '*Thiru-manthiram*' (a mystic work of Saint Thirumular); and in *Thiru-Arutpaa* of Saint Ramalinga Swamigal.

The six Chakras are *Muladhara, Svadhishthana, Manipura, Anahata, Vishuddha*, and *Ajna*. The Chakras, which are centers of energy, are in the astral body; they cannot be seen by the naked eyes but are visualised by Yogis in a state of concentration of mind; they have their corresponding centers in the spinal cord and the nerve-plexuses in the physical body — at the base of the spinal column, at the root of the reproductive organ, in the navel region (*Nabhisthana*), in the region of the heart, at the base of the throat, and at the space between the two eye-brows, respectively. The Kundalini Sakti, which is locked up in the individual in the *Muladhara Chakra*, is awakened by certain Yogic practices such as Asana, Pranayama, Bandha, Mudra, Dhyana, etc., and made to pass through the different Chakras and unite with Siva in His abode in the *Sahasraara Chakra*, at the crown of the head. The Yogi then enjoys Supreme Bliss.

"The Kundalini Yoga is an exact science," says Swami Sivanandaji Maharaj. It is a subject by itself, too unwieldy to be dealt with here. However, we shall see some salient features of it. Energy has two aspects — static and dynamic — and the Kundalini Yoga is the method of bringing them together, by which a union is also brought about between the individual and the cosmos. In the process of the evolution of the cosmos, the Supreme Absolute has gradually, in stages, concretised itself until the Pure Consciousness has come to the level of matter, as this physical cosmos. And in the process of the evolution of individuals, this cosmic energy gets pressed into the human system as a static potentiality, in the *Muladhara* Chakra. The

human system is vitally related to the outer cosmos in everyone of its levels. The seven lower regions (nether worlds) of *Patala, Mahatala, Rasatala, Talatala, Sutala, Vitala, and Atala* are said to be in the portion below the waist — in the toes, soles of the feet, ankles, shanks, knees, thighs, and the waist, respectively. Similarly, the Chakras (Muladhara, etc.), which are above the waist are points of link with the outer cosmos, in its different higher levels (or regions) and they correspond to the *Bhur, Bhuvar, Svar, Mahar, Janar, and Tapas Lokas* (or planes), respectively, and the *Sahasrara* to *Sathya Loka*. Since, in the case of all ordinary human beings, the Kundalini Sakti is lodged in the Muladhara, we are conscious of only the *Bhur Loka* or the physical cosmos.

By meditation on a Chakra, which is a focusing point for concentration, the Yogi simultaneously establishes contact with the corresponding Loka, and when the Kundalini Sakti is roused from a particular Chakra, he has full control over it and the corresponding Loka. Each succeeding Chakra, as also the Loka, being more subtle than the preceding one, the Kundalini Sakti is unfolded into greater and greater subtlety of consciousness as it transcends each Chakra, and when it goes beyond the *Ajna* and reaches the *Sahasraara* Chakra, it regains its pristine state of Pure Consciousness, when the Yogi enjoys Infinite Bliss.

Though energy pervades the whole of the human system, it gets located in certain centers, and generally it is in the Muladhara Chakra which is the source of energy for the entire system. As water whirls in a river, the Prana Sakti circles in these Chakras, and at each Chakra its whirling force takes a certain subtle shape which appears as the lotus with a particular number of petals. Hence, each Chakra is compared to a lotus with differing number of petals, and has a presiding deity, colour, shape, Bija-Akshara, etc. Since the Kundalini Sakti is a force, if it is awakened but not controlled and directed properly, it is likely to do more harm than good. Hence, a great moral

discipline is demanded of the practitioner and the Yoga is to be practised under the personal guidance of an adept. Thus, if the sleeping (or static) Kundalini Sakti is awakened from the Muladhara Chakra by the practice of Asanas, Pranayama, Bandhas, Mantra-Japa and Dhyana, and is taken from Chakra-to-Chakra, to the *Sahasraara* (or the thousand-petalled Chakra) at the crown of the head, a union will be brought about between Sakti and Siva, between the individual and the cosmos, between man and God, which is the Goal of Kundalini Yoga.

It is said that whatever be the Yoga practised, the Kundalini Sakti does get awakened and pass through the different Chakras, though unconsciously in the case of Yogas other than the Kundalini Yoga, and the Yogi gets different supernatural powers at different stages of his practice. A Yogi is likely to be tempted by them and get stagnated at any of these Chakras (or stages). Hence is the aspiration of the verse for that Supreme State which is beyond — transcending the Tattvas, religions, and Chakras. The Goal is that Absolute and it should never be forgotten.

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VERSE-48

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அறிவொன்று அறநின்று அறிவார் அறிவில்
பிறிவொன்று அறநின்ற பிரான் அலையோ
செறிவொன்று அறவந்து இருளே சிதைய
வெறிவென்றவரோடு உறும் வேலவனே.

Arivonru araninru arivaar arivil,
Pirivonru araninra piraan alaiyo
Serivonru aravanthu irule sithaiya,
veri venravarodu urum velavane.

Ceasing from every knowledge, those who Know, O Lord,
Doest Thou not, in their intelligence, inseparably stand?
Their relationships coming to naught and darkness destroyed,
O Velava! Thou abideth in them who, their delusion,
have conquered.

"In the consciousness (intelligence) of those who know, duly ceasing from all sensory knowing, does Thou not, O Lord, stand in union, without the least separation? (And when this practice is repeated and intensified) Every worldly or external relation (due to *Vikshepa*) coming to naught, and the darkness (of the veil or *Aavarana*) being destroyed, they overcome their delusion (*Avidya*); and, with them, O Lord Velayudha, Thou abidest for ever and ever."

Commentary

Arunagirinathar in this single verse instructs on the secret and essence of the whole of *Jnana Yoga* practice and God-

Realisation, which in the *Katha Upanishad* is conveyed in many Mantras. This is an exceptionally rare verse. This verse is an amplification of verse-42.

God is the Omnipresent Reality. He is everywhere — far and near, outside and inside, above and below. Hence, He is ever with us, too. He is the very essence (or substratum) in us. He is the Atman or the Self in us. Yet, it is an irony that we do not feel Him, experience Him, or realise Him. Why so? There is something fundamentally wrong in our seeking. We seek Him "outside" as an object. But, says the Saint, He is to be sought as our very being, as the Self, as the Knower in us, as the Intelligence in us. How to do this? First, we have to cease from sense-perception, from sensory-knowledge. But, we are so much wedded to the senses that we do not know of any other mode of knowing. To us, what is perceived through the senses is alone real, and even God should come within the ken of sense-perception! This sensory-knowledge (or the extroverted nature of the senses and mind) has to cease first. The senses and mind must turn back; they should become introvert and still by the cessation of all kinds of sense-perception. Not even a single sense, including the mind which is the sixth-sense, should be active. Hence, Arunagirinathar says, "*Arivu Onru Ara Ninru*," i.e., established in that condition wherein not even a *single sense* (including the mind) functions. This is perfect establishment in *Pratyahara* (complete withdrawal of senses) which presupposes the practice of and perfection in *Yama, Niyama*, etc.

After fulfilling this condition, we should "know". But we never do this. Without sense-control, without the practice of *Yama* and *Niyama*, without any check on the out-going tendencies of the senses and the mind, we try to do concentration and meditation to realise God. How can it be successful? Hence, "ceasing from every sense-perception", -- "*Arivu Onru Ara Ninru*," says Arunagirinathar. But when one

tries to do this, the mind will play a trick or mischief. The natural tendency of the mind is such that it will either be active or go to sleep. If we check its outgoing tendency (Rajas) and try to concentrate, it will slip into inertia or sleep (Tamas). This contingency has to be carefully avoided. Consciousness must be maintained and this is brought out by the word "*Arivaar*" (or "those who know"). This 'knowing' is, therefore, *after* cessation from every sense-knowing. Hence, this is quite a novel method of knowing. It is knowing directly by the intelligence itself, freed from the trammels of the mind and senses. When the senses do not function and the mind is still, the intellect becomes steady. Then the Jiva-consciousness (or *Chidabhasa*), which is a reflection of the *Kutastha* Atman (or pure Consciousness) in the intellect, also becomes completely steady or undisturbed, i.e., self-centered or self-conscious. This self-centered *Chidabhasa* is what is referred to by "*Arivu*", which is not intellect but the *intelligence*. That steady *Chidabhasa* is indistinguishable from the *Kutastha*, as the two stand together. Hence, the Jiva-consciousness should first be freed from objectification (*Arivu Onru Ara Ninru* – அறிவொன்று அற நின்று); it should also maintain consciousness, i.e., not go to sleep (*Arivaar* -- அறிவார்); in that non-objectified *Chidabhasa* coupled with self-awareness (*Arivil* -- அறிவில்), God (or Reality) stands in union without the least separation (*Pirivu Onru Ara Ninra Piraan* -- பிறிவொன்று அற நின்ற பிரான்).

What is this "union without the least separation"? The *Kutastha Chaitanya* (or the Atman) is the unchanging Reality. It is the witness consciousness that ever shines. Its reflection in the intellect is the Jiva-consciousness (or *Chidabhasa*). Ceasing from sense-perception, when the mind becomes still and the intellect steady, the reflection in it (or the *Chidabhasa*) also becomes steady and is in union with the Kutastha Atman. This can be made clear with the help of an illustration.

The sun shines. Its rays fall on a clean mirror, from which reflection-rays emanate. The sun may be regarded as the *Kutastha* and the reflection the *Chidabhasa*. The mirror, like the intellect, is the medium of reflection. Now, at the point of reflection in the mirror, where the sun's rays fall and the reflection emanates, the two are in inseparable union. At this point in the mirror, we cannot say whether it is the sun's ray or its reflection-ray. Whatever we may say, it is right; because both are there together and inseparably. The two cannot be distinguished at that point. This is the condition of the *Chidabhasa* and *Kutastha* in the higher reaches of meditation wherein, due to establishment in *Pratyahara* (or sense-control) and *Dharana* (or concentration of mind), the *Chidabhasa* (Jiva) comes back to the source (or point of reflection) and shines not on any object but on the *Kutastha* (God) itself. In that reach of meditation, the two are in inseparable union, as the point in the mirror; and the notion of "I" here can equally refer either to the *Kutastha* or *Chidabhasa*, according to whichever it chooses or feels. Peculiarly enough, there is a subtle but vital difference between the sun's reflection in a mirror and the *Kutastha's* in the intellect. In the former case, the original (the sun) and the medium of reflection (and, therefore, the reflection) are apart, as the sun is a limited object; in the latter case, the two are ever together, as the Kutastha is all-pervading. Hence, when the outgoing tendency of the *Chidabhasa* is totally suspended, it returns to its source where it stands in its natural state of inseparable union with the *Kutastha*.

This condition is experienced by us daily, in the state of deep sleep. But, there is no awareness then, and that makes the difference between sleep and meditation. The non-objectified awareness bereft of self-consciousness is sleep; the non-objectified awareness coupled with self-consciousness is meditation (Dhyana). Yet, this is not the highest attainment of Yoga, which is Self-Realization, because the cause of Jivatva is

still there, Avidya not being destroyed. The highest attainment is Samadhi (or Super-Consciousness), which is still higher. Hence, Arunagirinathar continues the verse and says something more, which indicates that this state of Yoga (or "union without the least separation") should become abiding, whereby Avidya (or the cause of Jivatva) will be destroyed, when the *Kutastha* (or the Lord) alone will shine, i.e., Samadhi (Super-Consciousness) would supervene.

Now, back to the point. In the highest reaches of meditation, the *Chidabhasa* (Jivatman) is in inseparable union with *Kutastha* (Paramatman). This is not an easy attainment and even when this is achieved with great effort and dexterity, it does not last for more than a moment, in the initial stages. This union comes and goes like a lightning flash. "One becomes vigilant then," says the Kathopanishad, "for Yoga is acquired and lost." Hence, by repeated practice and vigilance, such moments of flash have to be intensified and made frequent, until finally this union (Yoga) comes to abide permanently, which is Samadhi. What happens when the practice is, thus, persisted, is graphically portrayed in the latter half of the verse in which is implied all that is mentioned above. *Vikshepa* comes to an end; *Aavarana* is destroyed; the great delusion of *Avidya* (ignorance) is overcome; and, with that blessed soul, the Lord abides eternally.

Arunagirinathar uses the term "*Veri*" for *Avidya* (ignorance). "Veri" means delusion, confusion, madness, ignorance, etc. It, therefore, denotes Avidya. And he also clarifies what this Avidya is. It has two aspects (or powers), viz., *Aavarana* and *Vikshepa.* Aavarana is the screening power and Vikshepa is the projecting power. Aavarana is the screen-like darkness (*Irul*) that hides Reality (or Atman), and Vikshepa causes tossing of the intellect and the mind on account of which duality is perceived and relationships are established with the world outside.

External relationships with the world of objects are brought about by one or more of the five senses, which are activated by the mind agitated by desires or Rajas. This distracted condition is called Vikshepa. In the Pratyahara-perfected meditation this sense-activity completely ceases. Not even a single kind of relationship is had with the world, because not even a single sense operates. Hence, Arunagirinathar says, "every relation having ceased" (*Serivu Onru Ara Vandu* because of *Arivu Onru Ara Ninru*). This cessation of all relations is freedom from Vikshepa, which means a total annihilation of *Rajas*. This is the precondition for the destruction of the veil of darkness (Aavarana), which is predominantly *Tamas*.

When Vikshepa is overcome and the senses and mind are totally brought together, the mind becomes tremendously powerful, as there is no dissipation of energy through sense-activity. With this extraordinary, concentrated power, if the mind is not allowed to slip into inertia (or sleep) but awareness maintained, the darkness (or the veil) of Aavarana is destroyed. Thus, when, by repeated practice, the state of Yoga (inseparable union) attained in the highest reaches of meditation becomes abiding, every relation with the world (Rajas or Vikshepa) comes to an end and darkness (Tamas or Aavarana) is destroyed. What happens, then? Vikshepa and Aavarana being the two powers of Avidya, their destruction is the annihilation of Avidya itself. The Jiva being *Malina Sattva*, i.e., Sattva mixed with Rajas and Tamas, with the cessation of Vikshepa (Rajas) and destruction of Aavarana (Tamas), the intellect which is the medium of reflection becomes Sattvika (or Sattva-preponderated); and in it, the Kutastha Chaitanya (or the Witness consciousness) shines unobstructed and undistracted. The Kutastha is referred to as the ‘Velavan’. It is the Vel-Consciousness referred to in many earlier verses. Out of the many names of Lord Skanda, Arunagirinathar significantly uses "Velavan" here to suggest that the Lord abides forever in those

that have, thus, overcome their ignorance, as Wisdom or Consciousness. Such blessed souls are the *Jivanmuktas*, Jnanins, Sages, or God-men who have attained the Goal.

In this single verse, Saint Arunagirinathar dexterously and precisely brings together the imports of the concluding teachings of the *Kathopanishad* — of Mantras 10, 11, 14, and 15 of Valli VI. The first half of the verse may be said to correspond to Mantra 10 which says, "When the five organs of knowledge stand together with the mind and the intellect does not function (i.e., becomes calm), that they call the highest state." This seems to be the highest state reached in meditation and not the highest attainment itself, for this Yoga (or "union without the least separation) is lost, if one is not vigilant. Hence, Mantra 11 gives a note of warning: "The firm control of the senses, they regard as Yoga. At that time one gets careful, for Yoga is acquired and lost." Thus, if, with utmost care, this awareness of Yoga (union) is repeatedly had and made abiding, in due course the knots of the heart are broken and the goal is attained, as revealed in Mantras 14 and 15. "When all desires that dwell in the heart of one cease, then the mortal becomes Immortal and here attains Brahman." "When all the knots of the heart are severed here on earth, then the mortal becomes immortal, so far is the instruction." The destruction of the knots of the heart (*Avidya, Kaama*, and *Karma*) of the above Mantras are precisely conveyed by Arunagirinathar in the latter half of the verse — Avidya is explicitly mentioned, and Avarana and Vikshepa may be said to correspond to Kaama and Karma, respectively. The need for continued practice with vigilance, which is the import of Mantra 11, can also be seen hidden and implied in the wordings of the last two lines of the verse, which are so aptly composed by Arunagirinathar as to bring out this implication, effectively.

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VERSE-49

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தன்னந்தனி நின்றது தான் அறிய
இன்னம் ஒருவர்க்கு இசைவிப்பதுவோ
மின்னும் கதிர்வேல் விகிர்தா நினைவார்
கின்னம் களையும் க்ருபைசூழ் சுடரே.

Thannam thani ninrathu thaan ariya,
Innam oruvarkku isai-vippathuvo
Minnum kathivel vikirthaa ninaivaar,
Kinnam kalaiyum krupai soozh sudare.

That which Is by Itself, by Oneself is It to be realised;
To yet another can that (Experience) be disclosed?
O Lord with the twinkling Light-Vel and of forms varied!
Misery-Remover of those that think, O Resplendence,
Grace-Encircled!

"O Lord of the twinkling self-luminous Vel, with forms varied! O Grace-Encircled Resplendence that removes the misery (of Samsara) of those that think (of Thee)! That (Supreme Reality) which **is** Alone by Itself (i.e., One without a second) is to be realised by Oneself (by being It); can It (or that Experience) be related to yet another!

Commentary

This is an extraordinary verse revealing the nature of the Absolute Reality and the direct way of attaining It. Here is the Jivanmukta's/Arunagirinathar's instruction to aspirants that an

all-inclusive meditation on God or Reality is the royal means to the realisation of the Absolute (or God-Experience) which cannot be related but has to be experienced by oneself.

Such verses clearly confirm that Arunagirinathar was a saint of the highest Advaitic Realisation.

Each verse in the concluding portion of *Kandar Anubhuti* excels the other in profundity and spiritual depth. They reveal Saint Arunagirinathar's extraordinary capacity to express the highest Vedantic truths in simple terms and yet, convey their precise imports. Here is yet another verse of such a rare caliber.

Ekam-eva Advitiiyam Brahma — "One without a second is Brahman," says the Veda. This is what Arunagirinathar conveys by the phrase "*Thannan Thani Ninra Adhu"* in this verse. In verse 28, he said, "*Verum Thaanaai Nilai Ninra Adhu*", which also conveys the same meaning. "*Thani*" means Alone; and the phrase "*Thannan Thani*" is not a mere repetition of words, but a purposeful composition to convey the Upanishadic import. When we are in a forest or secluded place, away from people, we are alone. But, it does not mean that there are no other persons in the world. People are there, though not within our visibility. But Reality (Brahman) is not alone in this sense. It is Alone, all by Itself; and there is nothing second to It. Hence, It is described as "*Thannan Thani*", and not merely as "*Thani*" — One Alone, and not as One; because one implies two, three, etc. also. It is One Alone *without a second — Ekam* (One) *eva* (only or Alone) *Advitiyam* (secondless) *Brahma* (is Brahman) — *Thannan Thani* (Alone, by Itself) *Ninra* (which is) *Adhu* (That — Brahman).

Now, a doubt may arise in our minds. If Brahman alone exists and there is nothing second to It, what is it that we see as the world? Vedanta boldly declares that the world is a mere appearance, and that, too, a phase of Reality Itself; it does not

independently "exist" as a second entity other than That. It has no existence or reality of its own. Its existence is the existence-aspect of Brahman. That we see a thing does not mean that it has an existence of its own. There are many instances in our day-to-day life which can illustrate this.

Take the case of the ocean and the waves. The ocean is a huge mass of water and the wave a crest of water in the ocean. Now, is there anything in the wave other than water? No. The wave is water, is the ocean. Only we call it a wave, due to our perception being limited to a part and not the whole, to the appearance and not the essence. So is the case with the world. It is an appearance, whose reality is Brahman. We are deluded by the variegated names and forms, which are like waves in the ocean of Satchidananda. Just as the wave is a phase of the ocean, so is the world an aspect of Brahman (Reality). Not only the "other" objects of the world are like waves but we ourselves, too, are like waves. Our perception of the world is like one wave beholding another, which both are but phases of the same mass of water. Now, if a wave wants to know the ocean, what has it to do? So long as it is a wave, it cannot know the ocean; because it is so small and the ocean so vast. The wave cannot expand itself to the extent of the ocean. But there is a way to it. The wave is, in essence, water and the ocean, too, is nothing but water. Both are of the same substance. Hence, when the wave just subsides, it becomes the ocean, it is the ocean; and it knows the ocean. And, to the ocean there are no waves; they are the ocean itself. So is the case with the Jivas and the world. The Jiva is nothing but a crest of consciousness in the ocean of Satchidananda. The world, too, is nothing but the Sat (existence) aspect of Brahman. Their essence, their reality is Brahman. When the Jiva (or individuality) subsides, like the wave, Satchidananda alone is and It knows Itself. Knowing the Absolute is, therefore, being the Absolute Itself. *Brahmavid Brahmaiva Bhavati* — “the Knower of Brahman becomes

Brahman", says the scripture. Hence, Arunagirinathar says, "*Thaan* (*Adhuvaaga Irundhu*) *Ariya*." The way to the Infinite is, therefore, not extension but extinction of individuality (Jivatva). The essence in the Jiva, which is also the essence of the cosmos, which is God, has to know itself by being itself, and not try to know "something else" in which process externalisation is involved. The finite has to relinquish itself in the Infinite, which ***is*** its Substratum as well as the Substratum of everything.

Hence, That which is One without a second, is to be known by oneself by being It. Except this, there is no other way. Reality has to be experienced by each for oneself. It cannot be explained to others, for want of means of communication. Experiences cannot be related to others. Even ordinary sense-experiences like pleasure, pain, sweetness, beauty, etc., cannot be communicated to others. What to speak of the Experience-Absolute, where the experiencer himself is transformed into the Absolute? Who is to tell, and to whom? Neither "he" is, nor the "other" is, That alone is; It has to be experienced by each one for oneself, by being It Itself.

What, then, is the use of the realisation of the illumined souls, saints and sages, if their experience is not going to be of any help to others, as they cannot communicate it to others -- may be our pertinent doubt. It is true that they cannot communicate their experiences, but they can, and they do, show us the way to attain that experience, because they have trodden the path. Though the experience of the sweetness of sugar-candy had by one cannot be communicated to another, yet he can show us the means of obtaining it and tasting it for ourselves by which we, too, can have the same experience. This is what the Saint does in the latter half of the verse. Meditation is the royal road to the Experience, affirms Arunagiri. Meditation on what? On the Vel or Murugan, which are identical.

Now, what is the method of meditation? As the means determine the end, the Goal being the realisation of the non-dual Brahman as mentioned in the earlier part of the verse, the meditation suggested by Arunagirinathar to achieve it is a masterly one. But the technique of meditation hinted at is so secretly hidden that it is difficult to extract it from the verse and it is even likely to go unnoticed. Arunagirinathar addresses the Lord as "*Minnum Kathir-Vel Vigirdhaa*", in which is hidden the clue to meditation.

The nature of the Lord (Reality) is revealed in this phrase, a correct understanding of which is itself the technique of meditation. Let us first see the plain meaning of the phrase, which is, "O Lord of varied forms, with the lightning luminous-Vel." The Vel is Wisdom-Vel; *Kathir*-Vel. It shines, like the sun, by itself; It is self-luminous. It also flashes forth wisdom (light), like a lightning; It is *Minnum Kathir-Vel*. The Lord is many-formed. He is the *Baala-Murugan* who imprisoned Brahma and incidentally gave Upadesa on Pranava (OM) to Lord Siva (verse 36); He is the Lord with the six-faces (Shanmukha); He assumed many forms in the battle with the Asura Surapadman; He took the forms of a hunter, tree, old man, etc., to test and accept Valli; and He appears in the form in which His devotees worship (or meditate on) Him. Thus, He has numerous forms. These are the simple and plain meanings of the phrase. But it has a deeper significance which gives the clue to right meditation.

The Vel, as we have seen in many earlier verses, is the Absolute Consciousness. It is the Atman (Brahman). What is its nature? It is Self-Luminous; it is *Kathir-Vel*. It is the unchanging Reality, the Substratum of everything. It is not merely *the Kathir-Vel*; it is also "*Minnum*", i.e., "twinkling" or "flashing". It not only shines as the Absolute Consciousness but also it twinkles as the innumerable Jivas. The Jivas are the flashes or reflections of the Light of the Atman in the intellects.

Not merely this. The Lord is also of forms varied; He is *Vigirdhan*. Whatever we perceive are His forms only. In verse 51 also, Arunagirinathar says, "O Lord who comes as all forms (*Uruvaai*) and as all without form (*Aruvaai)*, etc." He Himself appears as all these names and forms, which have no reality in themselves apart from the reality (or existence) of the Absolute. "He it is that, as an old man, totters with a stick, thus, deceiving the human eye, for He is all things," says the Upanishad.

Thus, the *Kathir-Vel* (Absolute Reality) appears ("twinkles" or *Minnum*) as the Jivas from one aspect and as the vast creation of forms varied (*Vigirdhaa*) from the other. How beautifully and aptly has Arunagirinathar composed the phrase with "*Kathir-Vel*" in the middle, and "*Minnum*" and "*Vigirdhaa*" on either side of it, to show that the latter are the two aspects of the *Kathir-Vel* which is their Substratum — the ever-shining, self-luminous Reality.

The declaration of the Upanishads that this visible universe and the Jivas are none other than (phases of) Brahman Itself, as was explained earlier in this verse, is revealed and confirmed by Arunagirinathar in this phrase "*Minnum Kathir-Vel Vigirdhaa"*.

It will, thus, be seen that the visible world, the individual Jivas, and the Absolute Reality are nothing but He (or the Vel). The Absolute which is what really **IS**, is also what we are, and is also what we see. There is nothing other than the Great Reality. Everything is a phase of It, as the waves, ripples, etc., are of the ocean. This is the secret of meditation prescribed by the Saint to attain the Supreme Reality, which is One without a second (*Thannan Thani Ninra Adhu*).

Those who meditate thus (*Ninaivaar*), their miseries the Lord destroys (*Kinnam Kalaiyum*). The greatest of all miseries is that of Samsara (transmigration) — the endless cycle of birth

and death. This is overcome only when one knows the Supreme by being It. How can one be freed from the need to be reborn so long as one is a limited being? The limited cannot rest at peace as long as it is separated from the Unlimited, as long as it does not feel and realise its oneness with the Limitless. The river cannot be at rest unless and until it reaches the ocean and be the ocean. The child cannot be cajoled with anything except its mother's lap. The Jiva cannot escape transmigration, cannot but be tossed about by its own Karmas (which become inevitable on account of its limited consciousness which makes it feel that there is something outside it with which it has to establish relations), so long as it does not realise its identity with what is. The false notion of individuality (or separatist existence) is the source of all miseries, which is put an end to by the most potent weapon of meditation on Reality — as the Absolute and the relative; as the Invisible and the visible; as Consciousness and matter; as the Self-Luminous, Twinkling Vel and Lord Murugan of forms varied; as *Minnum Kathir-Vel Vigirdhaa* — on what **IS**.

If one is earnest and sincere in this meditation, success is certain, assures Arunagirinathar. Because, he adds, the Lord is an embodiment of grace and compassion. He is the grace-overflowing, the grace-shedding Flame (*Krupai Soozh Sudar*). "*Sudar*" means flame, resplendence, effulgence, Jyoti — Atma Jyoti. It is *Chaitanya* (or Consciousness), the Light that shines steadily — the *Kutastha* Atman. In the word "Sudar," is implied steadiness (or unflickering nature) (Please refer to the *Narayana Sukta* -- page 318). . It is, therefore, the Kutastha Chaitanya, not the Jiva-consciousness which constantly changes. Further, this Flame is grace-surrounded or grace-emitting (*Krupai Soozh*). That it is surrounded by (or that it sheds) grace shows that it itself is a Mass of Grace. The sun which is a mass of light sheds light. As rays of light emanate from the sun, so also rays of grace overflow from the Lord who

is an embodiment of grace. What we receive is but an infinitesimal part of the grace that comes from Him. But that is more than enough to destroy the misery of Samsara and illumine us.

The phrase "*Krupai-Soozh Sudar*" also provides a clue to meditation. It is meditation on the Atman (*Sudar)* which is a mass of Light, blissful in nature and grace overflowing. Such a meditation will put an end to all miseries.

Thus, the two phrases "*Minnum Kathir-Vel Vigirdhaa*" and "*Krupai Soozh Sudar*" beautifully suggest the highest types of meditation to attain the Undivided Existence-Consciousness-Bliss Absolute.

If the Lord is an embodiment of compassion, a grace-mass, why should He remove the miseries of only those who think of Him and not of all? Fire has the property to burn, but it does not mean it will burn any object, anywhere. It will burn only those that are offered into it, with which it comes into contact. The Ganga purifies the sins of only those that take a dip in it. The sun gives light. But if one remains in a closed room (or wraps oneself up) and would not expose oneself, what can the sun do? Even so, the Lord is compassionate, no doubt, but one should open one's heart to Him, so that His grace may be felt by one. One should "want" God; then God gives Himself to him. He does not want rich presents, high learning, or a sharp intellect. He wants that we want Him. Selfless service with the feeling of God's presence, study of scriptures that extol His glories, Japa, Kirtan, charity, meditation, etc., are all different practices to open one's heart to the Divinity that dwells within, to that Resplendence which is overflowing with grace.

Thus, to think of the Lord unceasingly, depending on Him for one's existence and wanting Him truly will destroy one's miseries and draw His divine grace which will manifest within

as the Resplendent Vel (or Pure Consciousness) — an experience which each one has to have for oneself and cannot be related to another.

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VERSE-50

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மதிகெட்டு அறவாடி மயங்கி அறக்
கதிகெட்டு அவமே கெடவோ கடவேன்
நதிபுத்திர ஞான சுகாதிப அத்
திதிபுத்திரர் வீறடு சேவகனே.

Mathikettu aravaadi mayangi arak,
Gathikettu avame kedavo kadaven
Nadi putthira jnaana sukhaathipa Ath— ,
Thithi putthirar veeradu sevakane.

Reasoning lost, enervated and deluded most,
Losing the Goal of virtuous life, shall I in vain be lost?
O Son of River, Lord of Wisdom-Bliss, and the Great!
Diti's sons' prowess destroyer, O Lord of Might!

"O Son of River (Ganga)! O Lord of Wisdom-Bliss! O Hero, Who vanquished the prowess of the sons of Diti! Intellect confounded, much distressed (in mind) and deluded, losing that great Blessedness (of *Anubhuti*) which accrues from a virtuous or righteous life, am I to be lost in vain? (No; it cannot happen.)"

Commentary

The treatise *Kandar Anubhuti* is approaching its grand finale in the next verse, wherein is a glorious description of the exalted state of a *Jivanmukta* who is ever established in God-Consciousness. Before that, Saint Arunagirinathar gives a

solemn assurance to all, that an earnest spiritual aspirant can never be lost in confusion, etc., so long as his ideal is the Lord. Already he has made the ground and assurance for it, in the previous verse, when he said, "O Grace-Surrounded Resplendence that removes the misery of those that think of Thee!" Here he says: "The Lord is '*Nadiputra*', -- One born of the holy river Ganga as Siva's Grace-Gift (verse-33) and hence grace-showering; He is the Lord of Wisdom and Bliss; He is the destroyer of evil propensities; and He is the Great Protector." When a devotee or an honest seeker of Truth takes refuge in such a Lord, how can he ever be lost or deprived of his Goal? He will surely be protected and taken care of by the all-merciful Lord. This assurance is implied in the verse itself! The verse being in the first person, as we go on reciting it over and over again, we can actually feel our hearts getting consoled with the assurance: '*Yaam irukka Bhayam Yen*')யாம் இருக்க பயம் ஏன்(-- "Why fear when I am here?" Glory to Lord Skanda and Glory to Arunagiri!

We have seen earlier (in verse 44(that the liberated soul moves about freely ministering spiritual food to hungry souls according to each one's needs. Thus are verses 45 to 50, of which the advices in verses 45 to 49 are specific in nature. In this verse, he gives a general advice and an assurance which will be helpful to every kind of seeker, irrespective of the path one treads, as everyone is bound to face this situation, for one reason or the other, sometime or the other, in one's spiritual career.

In all the earlier verses of *Kandar Anubhuti*, almost everything about the life spiritual and Sadhana has been said by the Saint. Before concluding his work with a grand description of the *Sahaja Samadhi Avastha* (or the natural, Super-Conscious state of a *Jivanmukta*), in the next verse,

Arunagirinathar poses, in this verse, a peculiar condition which will invariably be experienced by every Sadhaka *sometime or other in his spiritual march*, and prescribes a powerful means of avoiding such a predicament or overcoming it when it prevails. Because Arunagiri mentions this in the penultimate verse, it does not mean that the predicament mentioned herein will be experienced by seekers at this stage. That this condition is faced by every seeker at some or any stage in his practice is well-known to those who tread the path. Hence, instead of giving this verse at any particular place in the work, Arunagiri has chosen to mention it at the end, as a general help and assurance to all seekers.

In spite of one's vast study, long years of practice, and considerable amount of advancement in the spiritual path, there come moments when the understanding of the seeker gets confounded and bewildered, and he loses his power of reasoning. We may wonder as to why this should happen. But this is quite natural and there are various factors which might bring about this situation. Let us see a few major ones.

Doubts of various kinds start assailing seekers even after years of practice. "I have been doing Sadhana for such a long time; but I do not seem to have achieved anything substantial! Is the path I am treading a suitable one for me; or, is there something wrong in my practice? Have I chosen a proper Guru and is he competent to take me to the Goal? Am I really progressing or am I deceiving myself with false satisfactions?" Such critical moments are not uncommon in the life of spiritual seekers. Again, when one reads books of different authors advocating different techniques, or listens to the different teachings of preachers of vested-interests, or resorts to different methods of practice prompted, though unconsciously, by one's own lurking desires which come to the surface for their fulfillment at the opportune time, one gets bewildered and is at a loss to know as to what to do.

Again, when a seeker is faced with hard obstacles, or when he is put to severe test, or when he is placed under unfavorable circumstances, or is assailed by sickness, temptations, etc., his intellect gets confounded and he fails to understand as to what is happening to himself. It is at these junctures that his faith in the efficacy of his practice, in the competency of his Guru, and in his own fitness to the spiritual path, gets a rude shaking. He is then likely to lose his reasoning power.

Thus, though the reason for the seeker to get confounded may be more than one, the net result is one and the same, viz., loss of reason or confounding of the intellect. In the word "*Madhikettu*" with which Arunagirinathar begins this verse, and by which is meant "reasoning lost", he may be said to imply the various factors mentioned above which bring about the loss of reasoning power.

Now, what happens when one's reasoning power gets confounded? All the evils that come in its wake at once befall the seeker. The intellect being the highest faculty in an individual, when it is confused, the mind also gets enervated and gloomy. It cannot think properly. The confused intellect and the deluded mind, having lost the power of reasoning, mistake the wrong for the right, the pleasant for the good, pursue that which is detrimental to their own ultimate good, advance illogical arguments to justify their wrong pursuits and thus, go astray from the chosen Goal. What is the result of these? He gets lost in bewilderment and perishes in the end. All this is on account of confusion of intellect which may be brought about by various factors.

These are the crucial hours when the Sadhaka needs a peculiar kind of strength from within, which can save him from being torn asunder. It is to tide over these circumstances, as also to save oneself from falling a prey to such a predicament, that

this verse is given by the Saint, which provides the needed inner strength and enthusiasm to overcome the passing difficulty, which if not tackled suitably will result in one's destruction.

What is that strength? It is not Sadhaka's own strength of understanding, etc., but is from a different source altogether. It is in the intrinsic, essential nature of the Lord — the Object of one's devotion and meditation. How can loss of reason, etc., befall him who is faithfully devoted to Lord Skanda? It can never happen, assures Arunagirinathar. Why? Because of the very nature of the Lord. He is the '*Nadi-puttira*' (born of river Ganga) given as a grace by Lord Siva; He is the wisdom-bliss Absolute (*Jnana-Sukha*); and He is the vanquisher of the prowess of the Asuras. He is also the all-powerful protector.

Lord Skanda is the *Nadi-Puttira*; His Avatara took place in the holy river Ganga. He is the Lord of *Jnana* and *Sukha* — Wisdom and Bliss. He is the destroyer of the prowess of the *Diti-Puttiras*, the sons of Diti — the Asura Surapadman and his brothers were born of Diti to Sage Kasyapa. What a grand concept! The Jnana-Sukha Lord manifested Himself as the Nadi-Puttira to destroy the Diti-Puttiras.

The waters of the Ganga rush down from the high Himalayan peaks; and its flow is also perennial. Even so, Lord Skanda's grace descends upon His devotees, spontaneously and incessantly. Again, even as the "river-son" destroyed the Diti's sons, the Divine grace annihilates the evils that follow loss of reasoning. In response to the devout prayers of the Devas, the Lord whose essential nature is *Jnana-Sukha* (Wisdom and Bliss) appeared as the son of river Ganga and destroyed the sons of Diti and brought freedom and bliss to the Devas. Even so, the Lord (or the Self), whose very nature is *Satchidananda (Jnana-Sukha)*, manifests Himself as inner divine grace which removes all difficulties of the Sadhaka and fills him with strength and joy. Therefore, when one's Object of devotion or

meditation is the Wisdom-Bliss Lord Skanda, how can confusion of intellect, etc., arise in him? And even if they arise, how can they stand before the embodiment of Knowledge and Bliss, whose grace instantaneously flows into the Sadhaka's heart and removes them? When one's ideal is the Blissful-Awareness (or the Self), which is one's essential nature, how can confusion (or gloom) show its head in a seeker? Can darkness manifest where Light is? As long as one is aware that one's true being is the Atman, that the Lord indwels in one's heart, one cannot be swayed by the passing moods of the mind and intellect.

Thus, in these powerful modes of addressing the Lord, Arunagirinathar rules out the possibility of confusion, etc., arising in a Sadhaka, wherein also is implied the assurance that such a thing can never befall him. A deep reflection on the full import of the verse is capable of infusing such strength into the heart of the seeker that he can overcome any obstacle in his Sadhana. The verse is alike a "pick-me-up" in crucial moments.

"Reasoning lost, confounded, deluded, and deprived of Moksha, am I to perish! Can such a condition befall me! No, it can never happen. Because, O Lord, Thou, to whom I am devoted and who art my Object of meditation, art the grace-showering "river-son", the Lord (embodiment) of Wisdom-Bliss (Jnana-Sukha), and the vanquisher of the prowess of Diti's sons." Thus, does Arunagirinathar assure a true seeker whose Goal is clear and well-conceived that he can never come to be assailed by confusion, etc. Let all Sadhakas, therefore, take to heart that Divine Grace is unfailing in its nature, and that so long as they do not lose sight of the Goal, divine grace shall protect them and they can never come to perish.

The verse may also be taken as an appeal to the Lord to save one from losing the goal of God-Attainment (*Anubhuti*) on account of loss of reason, confusion of intellect, delusion, etc.

"Am I destined to perish? O Lord! Let it not happen. Save me," is the appeal of a helpless devotee (or seeker). Arunagirinathar has so powerfully worded and composed the verse that a sincere recitation of it brings tears in one's eyes, which draw into one's heart that ever-descending grace of the Lord. This verse is a boon to seekers in the hours of bewilderment and confusion, and a daily prayerful repetition of it will also safeguard one against any such contingency.

The placing of this verse as the penultimate one of the work seems to suggest that it is like the *Phalasruti* — the verse that declares or assures the beneficial results accruing from a devoutful and regular recitation of the work, viz., an assurance that those who do *paaraayana* of or recite the *Kandar Anubhuti* daily and systematically, and try to practise its teachings will unfailingly receive the grace of the all-purifying, Wisdom-Bliss Lord, which will wipe off one's confusion, delusion and other obstacles that might come in the way of one's attaining the Goal, viz., *Anubhuti* (God-Experience).

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VERSE-51

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உருவாய் அருவாய் உளதாய் இலதாய்
மருவாய் மலராய் மணியாய் ஒளியாய்க்
கருவாய் உயிராய் கதியாய் விதியாய்க்
குருவாய் வருவாய் அருள்வாய் குகனே.

Uruvaai aruvaai ulathaai ilathaai,
Maruvaai malaraai maniyaai oliyaai
Karuvaai uyiraai gathiyaai vithiyaai,
Guruvaai varuvaai arulvaai guhane.

With form and formless, what is not and what is,
Flower and fragrance, gem and radiance,
Body and soul, Salvation and rules of righteousness,
O Lord Guha, Who comes (as all these and) as Guru!
Bestow Thy Grace.

"O Almighty Lord Guha! O Supreme Being, Who comes (as all these which are) with form and without form, as what is and what is not, as flower and (its) fragrance, as gem and (its) radiance, as body (universe) and soul (universal spirit) (that pervades and animates it), as the rules of righteousness and Moksha (that is attained through them) (i.e., as the means and as the End), and as the Guru! Bestow Thy Grace (on all)." எல்லாமாயும் குருவாயும் வருகின்ற குஹப்பெருமானே, நீ எல்லோருக்கும் அருள் புரிவாயாக.

Commentary

This is a very beautiful verse with which Saint Arunagirinathar concludes his divine work *Kandar Anubhuti*. This verse is a spontaneous and ecstatic outpouring of the Saint's highest experience of God, composed in a simple, melodious and majestic style which lulls one into a spiritual mood even as one recites it. Herein he portrays graphically the highest state of God-Intoxication of a fully illumined *Jnani*, called the *Sahaja Samadhi Avastha*, which is his own experience and which is the experience of all Self-Realised Saints.

The Sadhaka, who attained the *Pesaa Anubhuti* (Speechless Experience or *Maha Mowna* in verse 43), on rising from that experience as a *Jivanmukta*, beholds the Lord alone — within as the Vel and without as the Feet that shine everywhere (verse 44). With this God-Awareness, he moves about doing *Lokasangraha* (spiritual service) for the solidarity of the world by giving the needed guidance to seeking souls. By and by, his awareness of God becomes deep, and more and more saturated, so much so that he gets established in a state of perpetual and uninterrupted consciousness of God (*Sahaja Avastha*), wherein established he does not merely behold God **in** everything but beholds Him **as** everything! To him, it is not that God is **in** everything, but God **is** everything, and so God 'comes' as everything. Whatever he sees, touches, smells, tastes, or hears is God. Whatever he thinks, feels, or understands is God. God is above and below; God is matter and spirit; God is the path and the destination; within is God; without is God. Everything is God. Everywhere is God. Such is the majesty of the Divine Experience of a liberated soul that is poured through this verse by the Saint of God-Experience. As Saint Thayumanavar said, Saint Arunagirinathar had *Anubhuti* of Lord Skanda and then gave the work '*Kandar Anubhuti'* in

order that others too may attain that Blessedness which he had attained. Such is the glory of a Self-Realised saint!

To such an exalted soul, the usual concepts of form and formlessness, existence and non-existence, etc., which are valid only to the duality-perceiving human mind, become meaningless words. Everything gets transformed and transcended into a homogeneous undivided experience. This mystic experience of a Jivanmukta is impossible of description in human language. Yet, Arunagirinathar does it in a most dexterous manner, permitted within the limits of a verse of 16 words! He brings all possible concepts in a beautiful manner, so as to cover the entire range of human experience and gives us a glimpse of that experience.

God as 'with form' and 'without form': The moment we open our eyes, we see things with different forms and shapes. So, the first concept we have of things is "form". We also sense things without form like air, ether, smell, etc. Hence, Arunagirinathar begins the verse with "*Uruvaai, Aruvaai*", i.e., "with form and without form". In these two words themselves, he covers everything! Form and formlessness —that is all, there is no third concept known to us, and everything can be brought under these two.

In describing the Avatara of Lord Skanda, the *'Skanda Puraanam'* says: *"Aruvamum Uruvum Aagi, Anaadiyaaaip Palavaai Onraai, Piramamaai Ninra Syothip Pizhambu"* — "That Consciousness-Mass (Light) which is the Supreme Brahman; which is both formless and with form; which is beginningless, the many as also the One." It is evident from this that anything and everything that has form or is formless, is God and God alone. Hence, it is not that God is only certain forms or that He can appear only in particular forms. In fact, all forms are His only. But this can be experienced only by a Jivanmukta. And so, to the realised soul, says Arunagirinathar,

God comes as all these which have form and which have no form, simultaneously, because He is both (*Uru* and *Aru*).

God as 'that which is' and 'that which is not': Then comes the next pair, "*Ulathaai Ilathaai*", i.e., "that which is and that which is not". People's notion of "is" and "is not" differs widely and at different levels of evolution. To the crude materialist, the physical cosmos alone is, i.e., there is only matter or nature, and there is no such thing as God. On the other hand, to the Vedantin, Brahman alone is (i.e., eternally Real), because It is the Absolute, and the world is not (i.e., not eternally real), because it is subject to change and transcendence. But, says Arunagirinathar, to the illumined sage, God comes both as what is and what is not, whatever our understanding and acceptance of these concepts be. Whether the world is and God is not, or God alone is and the world is not — He comes as both. This is the experience of a full-blown Jnanin of the highest Advaitic Realisation, wherein even the physical cosmos, etc., which are initially rejected as "*Neti-Neti*" ("Not this, Not this") for the purpose of sublation and transcendence, are experienced as God Himself (Brahman) as "*Sarvam Khalvidam Brahma*" — "All indeed is Brahman." Thus, in the very first line of the verse, Arunagirinathar has given out in essence the experience of *Sahaja Avastha* of a Jivanmukta in a most inspiring manner.

It is interesting to note here that in verse 13, Reality (God) was described as "Not with form, not without form; not that which is, not that which is not" (*Uruvanru, Aruvanru; Ulathanru, Ilathanru*). Here it is said, "God who comes with form and without form; as that which is and as that which is not" ("*Uruvaai, Aruvaai; Ulathaai, Ilathaai*). In verse 13, it is a description of the nature of Reality *by a Sadhaka who was 'given' that experience*; hence, it is said to be neither this nor that, i.e., Reality is indescribable. But here, it is a description of the '*actual'* experience of God of a God-Realised saint; hence,

He is both this and that. Again, there the word "*Adhu*" ("That") is used for Reality (God), which suggests or gives a feeling of remoteness; but here it is "Guhan" which means "He who shines in the heart-cave", which is suggestive of nearness, rather a feeling of "one's own" as He has come into one's heart, which also indicates that it is one of *'actual'* experience. Again, in that earlier stage of Sadhana (of verse 13), the Sadhaka's experience is: "That Reality Itself is Murugan, is the Lord with the peerless Vel and is one's Guru." Reality (God) could be experienced only up to that level, *and not as the all*. But here, *God is all* — with form and without form, what is and what is not, the flower as well as its fragrance, the gem and the light that it emanates, the body as well as the soul (consciousness) that animates it, the Goal (Moksha) as also the path (of righteousness or Dharma) that leads to it, and finally the Guru. A critical study of these two verses would reveal the vast gulf of difference that obtains between "description" of Reality and "Experience" of Reality. God can be experienced but not described or explained or understood.

God as flower and fragrance, gem and luster (substance and quality): Now, let us proceed further. From the mutually exclusive and positive-negative concepts of with form and without form, or what is and what is not, Arunagirinathar takes us to those of substance and its quality — flower and fragrance, gem and luster. A substance and its quality are not mutually exclusive like those of with form and without form or what is and what is not — that is, they can and do go together. Yet, they are not one and the same. The flower is one thing and its fragrance is another, the gem and the light that it sheds are two different things. But to a liberated soul, the flower is God and the fragrance that it wafts is also God; the gem and the luster that emanates from it are both He only. Hence, Arunagirinathar says, "*Maruvaai Malaraai Maniyaai Oliyaai*", i.e., as flower and its fragrance, as gem and its luster, in the

second line of the verse, which concepts are of an advanced nature in human experience.

God as body and soul: He then says, "*Karuvaai Uiraai, Gathiyaai Vidhiyaai*", i.e., "as body and soul, as Moksha and rules". The body is *Jada* (or an inert object) and the soul is *Chaitanya* (conscious principle). The soul animates and activates the body. Without the soul, the body becomes lifeless and decays. The value, the beauty, etc., of the body lie in the life-principle. But the soul, too, cannot exist without a body (physical, subtle, or causal) and work out its Karmas, and attain Moksha. That God comes as body and soul shows that He is both matter and spirit, which cannot exist independent of each other, as they are mutually dependent.

God as Moksha as well as the means to attain it: Again, He is the state of Moksha or Liberation as well as the *Vidhi* or rules of commission prescribed in the Vedas, Agamas, etc. The rules of *Dharma* are the means and the Moksha is the End. Dharma (righteousness) leads to Moksha, and Moksha is the determining factor as to whether an act or rule of conduct is Dharmic or not, is righteous or not. Though the two are mutually determining, yet they are not one and the same. But to the Jivanmukta, God is both and comes as both. Thus, in the third line of the verse, the concepts of mutual dependence and determination are conveyed, which are more advanced than those of the earlier ones and cover the highest range of human experience.

All these concepts of mutual exclusion and contradiction (line 1); of substance and its quality (line 2); and of mutual dependence and determination (line 3); are a graduated series in the development of human thinking and understanding, which cover all possible range of human experience, and they are given in pairs to show that they are not identical. Hence, to us humans, God can come either as this or that of the two

concepts, and this is so because of our individualistic existence, as a personality. The Jiva-consciousness is caught up in the process of spatio-temporal existence. It has limited itself to a particular mind and body, as a result of which it has notions of inside and outside. Again, because it externalises itself through the senses, its perception gets limited and it can only see, hear, or sense things and that too only in a limited capacity. Therefore, there arise the concepts of form and formlessness, flower and fragrance, body and soul, etc., in the bound soul. But the liberated one has freed himself from the limitations of spatio-temporal existence and has identified himself with God who is all things at once. To such a blessed soul, who has identified himself with everything, there is nothing inside or outside, with form or without form, etc.; God is everything and He comes as everything, *not in succession but simultaneously*. This is to experience God or oneself in everything as everything at once. And it is this experience that we are given a glimpse of in this verse. Any form that is visible is God and the invisible and formless are also God. What is, is He; and what is not, is also He alone. Flower and its fragrance are He. Gem and its luster (all substances and all qualities), body and soul (cosmos and its animating spirit or Isvara), Dharma and Moksha (means and the End) — everything is He. He comes or is experienced as all, at the same time. Can we imagine this experience of the Jivanmukta? Even to think, it is baffling. A moment's contemplation of this mystic experience is enough to instill a thrill of ecstasy in us.

Now Arunagirinathar proceeds to the fourth line and says: ‘God comes as Guru.’ Peculiarly enough, here Arunagirinathar does not use a pair of concepts as in the earlier lines, but a single concept because Guru is God Himself (verse 13) and all concepts merge themselves in the Guru. The Guru Gita says: "Prostration to that Guru who shows the Truth of the word `**Thou**', who pervades the whole universe of mobile and

immobile creation with its stationary and moving creatures. Prostration to that Guru who shows the Truth of the word `**That**', who pervades the mobile and immobile creation in the form of the Undivided Infinite. Prostration to that Guru who shows the Truth of the word `**Art'** (in the sentence `Thou art that' – *Tat Twam Asi*), who, in the form of the Mass of Consciousness, pervades the whole of the three worlds with their mobile and immobile inhabitants. Prostration to that Guru who is beyond Nada, Vindhu, Kala, who is Pure Consciousness, Eternal, Peaceful, beyond space, and untainted. Guru is Brahma; Guru is Vishnu; Guru is Siva; Guru is the Supreme Brahman itself. Prostration to that Guru." Hence in saying Guru, Arunagirinathar brings together all that has been said in the earlier three lines of the verse. And so, "*Guruvaai Varuvaai Aruvaai Guhane*" — "O Almighty, who comes as Guru! O Lord Guha! Bestow Thy Grace" — is considered as complete in itself and as equivalent to the whole verse. {Here, "*Varuvaai Guhane*" is taken as "*Varuginra Guhane*")வருகின்ற குகனே) ---- as gerund or verbal noun (*Vinaiyaal-aniyum Peyar*)}.

This last line also means "O Lord Guha! Come as (my) Guru and bless (me)." For these reasons it is regarded as a Mantra and is chanted, recited and sung with love and feeling (*Bhakti* and *Bhava*), which brings all blessedness to oneself as also to others.

The first verse of *Kandar Anubhuti* begins with "*Aadumpari Vel Aniseval*" which is considered as a Mantra — "*Velum Mayilum Thunai*" meaning "The Vel and the Peacock are (my) protection or support." The last verse of *Kandar Anubhuti* concludes with "*Guruvaai Varuvaai Arulvaai Guhane*," which is also regarded as a Mantra. Thus, the work begins and ends with Mantras; and it also contains many Mantras in the other verses. Hence, *Kandar Anubhuti* is held in high esteem as a "*Mantra-Shastra*" — a treatise full of Mantras,

capable of bestowing all the good that one might seek by a devout and regular recitation of it.

In this verse, the Lord is invoked as "Guha", which literally means "One who dwells or shines in the cave of the heart." There is a great significance in Arunagirinathar's selecting this Name of the Lord for this verse, though for the title of the work, *Kandar Anubhuti*, he has selected the Name "Kanda" (or Skanda). It is worth noting that in the entire work of *Kandar Anubhuti*, there is an explicit reference to the Lord of one place only, viz., Thiruchchengodu or Naagaasala in verse 11. It is probably because the Lord enshrined in the temple at this place, to whom Arunagirinathar made a special prayer, granted him a boon, that wherever he be, if he utters the Name of "Kanda" and calls the Lord, He would appear and give him Darshana. And so, as a measure of gratitude, Arunagirinathar seems to have selected the name of "Kanda" not only for the title of this treatise, but also for two more of his works, viz., *Kandar Alankaaram* and *Kandar Anthaathi*. But, for this verse and as the last word of it, he has purposefully chosen "Guha" because it is the *Sahaja Avastha* verse and "Guha" is the most appropriate Name to be employed here.

In the *Narayana Sukta* of the Yajur Veda, there is a grand description of the Supreme Being as follows: "The Divine Being is the support of the entire cosmos which is identified with Him. He has thousands of eyes and heads, i.e., all eyes and heads are His. He is the source of joy. He has embodied Himself in man as his support, as the indwelling Spirit which pervades his whole being as well as inside and outside of whatsoever seen or heard (near or far, gross or subtle) is there in this world. He is the Infinite Self; He is the real meditator and meditation; and He is the Goal. He is to be meditated upon. The place for meditation on Him is the ether in the heart. The heart is the great abode of the universe and in the middle of the heart there is a Fire; in the center of that Fire, there is a tongue or

flame of Fire of the colour of shining gold and dazzling like the flash of lightning. The Supreme Being (*Paramatman*) dwells in the middle of that flame. He is the creator Brahma, He is Siva, He is Vishnu, He is Indra, He is the material and efficient cause of the Universe and the Supreme Self-luminous Pure Consciousness," concludes the Sukta.

Arunagirinathar refers to that Supreme Being as "Guha" — One who dwells or shines in the cave of the heart; who is and who comes as everything and as the Guru. How beautifully does the Saint bring out the essence of the whole of the Narayana Sukta in this single verse of Kandar Anubhuti! The Narayana Sukta and the Kandar Anubhuti are both the overflow of divine ecstasy of illumined souls that were bathed in the ocean of Consciousness-Bliss. Hence, significantly and purposefully did Arunagirinathar select the Name of "Guha" for this concluding *Sahaja Avastha* verse.

"Guha" is thus the Supreme Consciousness that reveals itself everywhere as everything. He is the Self (Brahman) in which a liberated soul is established. "Guha", being the Self of the Jivanmukta as well as of the cosmos, comes as everything. God's coming as everything does not mean a physical coming of things involving movement in space and time, but "coming in experience", i.e., whatever is, is experienced as God. This is God-Coming (God-Experience). It is something different from physical coming because if God, as an object with form (*Uru*), were to come towards a liberated soul, He has to move in space which also is He only, space being without form (*Aru*). Hence, when Arunagirinathar says that God comes as this, as that, as everything, it mystically means that the Jivanmukta experiences everything as God, as his own Self, as "Guha", because he has identified himself with or become the Universal Self, i.e., the Self of all. He, therefore, recognises or feels his Self in everything and everything in the Self; he is the Seer in the seen and the seen in the Seer; he experiences God as all and all as

God. This is the essence of God-Vision (Bhagavad Darshana or Atma Darshana) which Arunagirinathar purports to convey through this verse. These are all different ways of expressing the inner mystic experience of a Jivanmukta, which is described in the language of the humans as "with form, without form, etc., etc.", which is intended to reveal that it is a simultaneous experience of all things at one and the same time. This perception of non-difference is the culmination of God-Experience — *Abheda Darshanam Jnanam*. Such a sage of Wisdom is a moving God on earth, to whom the world resorts for succor, in whom all beings find solace, around whom seeking souls gather like hungry children around the mother, and for whom nothing makes any difference because of his *Abheda Darshanam*. This is the *Sahaja Samadhi Avastha* of Jivanmuktas who live for the welfare and happiness of all beings:

'*Sarvabhutahite rataah'* — "(Rishis are) intent on the welfare of all beings" --- (Gita V-25).

எல்லோரும் இன்புற்றிருக்க நினைப்பதுவே அல்லாமல் வேறொன்றறியேன் பராபரமே! -- "Except wishing that all people live in happiness, I know nothing else, O Supreme Being." --- Saint Thayumanavar.

'*Sarve Bhavantu Sukhinah:*' -- "May all beings be Happy." --- Veda

This is the *Sahaja Avastha* of Jivanmuktas who are intent on the welfare of all beings, of whom Sri Swami Sivanandaji Maharaj was one. He writes in his "*Sivananda Gita*" (concise autobiography): "To raise the fallen, to lead the blind, to share what I have with others, to bring solace to the afflicted and to cheer the afflicted and suffering are my ideals. To have perfect faith in God, to love my neighbour as my own Self, to love God with all my heart and soul, to protect cows, animals, women,

and children are my aims. My watchword is love. My goal is *Sahaja Samadhi Avastha* (or the natural, continuous super-conscious state)." This is the humble way in which Swami Sivananda puts *what he actually was and did*.

God is Satchidananda. He is an ocean of Indivisible Existence-Consciousness-Bliss. The ocean is nothing but water and God is nothing but Consciousness. *Prajnanam Brahma* — Pure Consciousness is Brahman, says the Upanishad. Ocean is water, whether calm at the bottom or dashing as waves on the surface. Similarly, it is Satchidananda, whether in that absorbed state of *Pesaa Anubhuti* (verse 43) or as this vast panorama of creation, in this *Sahaja Avastha*. In the ocean, as waves of water dash against each other, mingle with one another, and remain as water; in the ocean of Satchidananda, consciousness in the form of objects roll over and dash against each other, and remains as Consciousness. This is the *Sahaja SamadhiAvastha* (the natural super-conscious state) of a liberated sage.

In verse 43, Arunagirinathar described the "*Pesaa Anubhuti*" wherein the objective world is totally negated and one gets absorbed in Speechless-Experience (*Maha-Mowna*). But, on rising from that Experience, when he moves about in "this world of ours" for the sake of *Lokasangraha*, what does he experience? To him, the world ceases to be as we perceive it. It is sublimated into God. The self-same Satchidananda dances as all these names and forms, as all qualities and substances, as the physical, subtle, and causal realms — in short, as everything. Whatever the senses perceive, the mind thinks or the intellect understands is all Satchidananda; because they have all been transformed by the magical touch of God-Consciousness. It is Consciousness beholding Consciousness, God beholding God, there is no man, no world; but God and God alone. A grand experience! However much we may try to explain this experience of *Sahaja Avastha*, it would be inadequate and

unsatisfying, because it is not something to be explained but experienced.

However much one may write or read about the glory and power of the sun, until and unless one 'exposes' oneself to it and bathes in the sunlight, one cannot feel and experience the sun's light, energy and warmth. Even so, however much we may read or write about the glory and the *Sahaja Avastha* experience of Jivanmuktas and sages, who are like spiritual suns, we cannot have a clear idea of them unless we actually live in their company and presence, even if it be for a short while (which is real Satsanga). We have to be 'exposed' to them. Then only we can know or experience their power, glory and influence; what they are, how they live and work, how they benefit mankind; what *Sahaja Avastha* is. Only to provide this opportunity there are always living saints in India. There is no dearth of saints and sages at any time. There has been and there will always be an unbroken stream of living saints in India. Glory to Jivanmuktas, saints and sages!

Here, we may have an interesting digression. Some are of the opinion that the first 43 verses of the work are only Arunagirinathar's original compositions, as verse 43 concludes saying, "*Pesaa Anubhuthi Pirandadhuve* — Speechless-Experience was born", and that the remaining last 8 verses are not Arunagirinathar's and are subsequent additions by someone else. But others hold that all 51 verses are Arunagirinathar's own and original compositions; they being of an exceptional nature. From our study, we can conclude that all the 51 verses of *Kandar Anubhuti* are Arunagirinathar's own; and in fact, the last 8 verses are the real cream and essence of the work. These verses are of an extraordinary nature and we can even affirm, without the least hesitation, that none but Arunagirinathar could compose such pithy verses of high spiritual caliber. The entire essence of Vedantic Sadhana as well as many secret clues to higher meditation are so mystically revealed in these verses that

it is only Arunagirinathar that could do it. Also, as we have seen in our explanations of verses 43 and 44, it is rare that those who attain the Speechless-Experience (*Pesaa Anubhuti*, verse 43) remain absorbed in it and do not emerge from it. On the other hand, more often than not, they do arise from it and move about as Jivanmuktas and guide the aspirants. Else how are we to account for the rich legacy of spiritual wisdom (literature) that we have inherited today? Were Arunagirinathar and other saints to remain absorbed in Samadhi and not arise from it and give us such divine gifts, what would be our pitiable condition? Even this precious gift of *Kandar Anubhuti* which, as Thayumanavar said, was given to us by Arunagirinathar after his attaining God-Experience could not otherwise have come to us. Hence, it would not be proper to conclude that because "Speechless Experience was born" occurs in verse 43, the work ends with that verse.

Samadhi or the state of total absorption in super consciousness is not necessarily the culmination of *Anubhuti* (God-Experience). *Sahaja Samadhi* or natural and continuous super-conscious state is the final experience, as we have seen from the words of Sri Swami Sivanandaji Maharaj. While he is absorbed in Samadhi, the liberated one is in 'static identity' with God; when he rises from it, he is in 'dynamic identity' experiencing God in and as everything. "Kandar" or Skanda (God) is all things. *Kandar Anubhuti* or God-Experience is, therefore, to experience God as all things and all things as God. This is *Sahaja Samadhi* and this is the purport of this verse.

Swami Sivananda undertook a tour of India and Ceylon for 2 months in 1950 to awaken the masses and to share his bliss with all. When he returned to the Ashram from that tour, he said about his experience: "In this tour, God came to me in His *Virat-Swarupa* --- as multitudes of devotees --- eager to listen to the tenets of Divine Life. At every centre I felt that God spoke through me, and He Himself in His cosmic form

spread out as the multitude, listened to me. He sang with me, He prayed with me; He spoke and He also listened. "*Sarvam Khalvidm Brahma* -- All indeed is Brahman." This is *Sahaja Samadhi*.

Of course, Samadhi and Sahaja Samadhi — static identity and dynamic identity, respectively — are only from our standpoint and they are not relevant to the Jivanmukta himself who is ever in identity with God. Since, however, we see him "absorbed" or "moving about, walking, etc.," we make this distinction between 'Samadhi' and 'Sahaja Samadhi' — between static identity and dynamic identity — for our convenience. If static identity is "*Pesaa Anubhuti*", we may term dynamic identity as "*Nadamaadum Anubhuti*". And this state is so very graphically portrayed in this verse. Those blessed to be in this state are verily moving Gods on earth, "*Nadamaadum Theivam*", of whom Saint Arunagirinathar is unique. Who but Arunagirinathar could pour out one's experience in such ecstatic and mystic terms as in this last verse!

Now, let us see the whole verse: "O Lord Guha! O Supreme Being, Who comes (as all these which are) with form and without form, as what is and what is not, as flower and (its) fragrance, as gem and (its) luster, as body (universe) and soul (Universal Spirit) (that animates it), as Moksha and the rules of righteousness (as the End and the means), and as the Guru! Bestow Thy grace."

"*Arulvaai*" -- அருள்வாய் — "Bestow Thy Grace" or "Bless" — says Arunagirinathar. Bless whom? It is not "Bless me" but "Bless all". Because, what more blessing does that Jivanmukta of such an exalted state need? He, himself, is a blessing to others. It is, therefore, more appropriate to take it as his prayer to Lord Guha, who comes as all and as Guru, to bless all by coming (as everything and) as their Guru. That

blessedness of God-Experience which he enjoys, he prays to the Lord to confer on others, too. It is a prayer to bless all in general and in particular, those who recite this Moksha-conferring *Kandar Anubhuti*, who study it systematically (*Paaraayana and Svadhyaya*), understand it, and try to put its teachings into practice — even in a small measure.

God is all. He comes as all. So He is beseeched to bless All. Arunagirinathar could not content himself with his *Anubhuti* or Realisation of God. He wishes that everyone should have God-Experience, even as Sri Swami Sivanandaji Maharaj wished. When Swami Sivanandaji attained Illumination (Realisation), he had vision of God and at that time, he says: "I heard a voice from within: `Siva(nanda) wake up (from Samadhi), and fill the cup of your life with this nectar; share it with all. I shall give you strength, energy, power and wisdom.' I obeyed His command. He did fill the cup and I shared it with all."

The one thing that Swami Sivanandaji never was tired of hammering in all his writings and speeches was: "Goal of life is God-Realisation. You must attain it in this very birth." And in the end he would add a benediction, "May you all shine as Jivanmuktas in this very birth!" Such was his eagerness that all should have Divine Experience. So was Arunagirinathar's too, and he gave this beautiful word-garland of *Kandar Anubhuti* to the world in order that everyone might offer it to Lord Skanda by a devout recitation of it and thereby have that Divine Experience which was specially conferred on him to be shared with all.

Perhaps all that we have seen in this study right from the very beginning, from the *Kaappu* verse onwards, and even much more, is meant by Saint Thayumanavar, in his pithy tribute paid to Saint Arunagirinathar:

Kandar Anubhuti Petru Kandar Anubhuti Sonna
Enthai Arul Naadi Irukkum Naal Ennaalo?

"When shall be that blessed day, when I shall seek (and be recipient of) the grace of my (spiritual) father (Saint Arunagiri) who, **after** 'experiencing' *Anubhuti* or Direct Spiritual Realisation of Lord Skanda, gave (or gifted us with) the work '*Kandar Anubhuti*'?"

Thus ends the grace-bestowing, soul-elevating, mystic work *Kandar Anubhuti* — a complete treatise on Advaitic Realisation and the Sadhana for it.

May the grace of Saint Arunagirinathar be upon us all! May we daily recite this all-purifying, all-protecting and Bhoga-Moksha-conferring divine gift of *Kandar Anubhuti* and enjoy the grace of Guha!! May He bless us all with God-Experience in this very birth!!!

அவன் அருளால் அவன் தாள் வணங்கி,

அவன் அருளால் அவனை அடையப் பெற்றேன்.

அவன் அருளால் எல்லோரும் அவனை அடைவார்களாக.

Om Tat Sat Sivanandarpanamastu!

Om Tat Sat Saravanabhavarpanamastu!

Om Tat Sat Brahmarpanamastu!